THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY

STAR TREK

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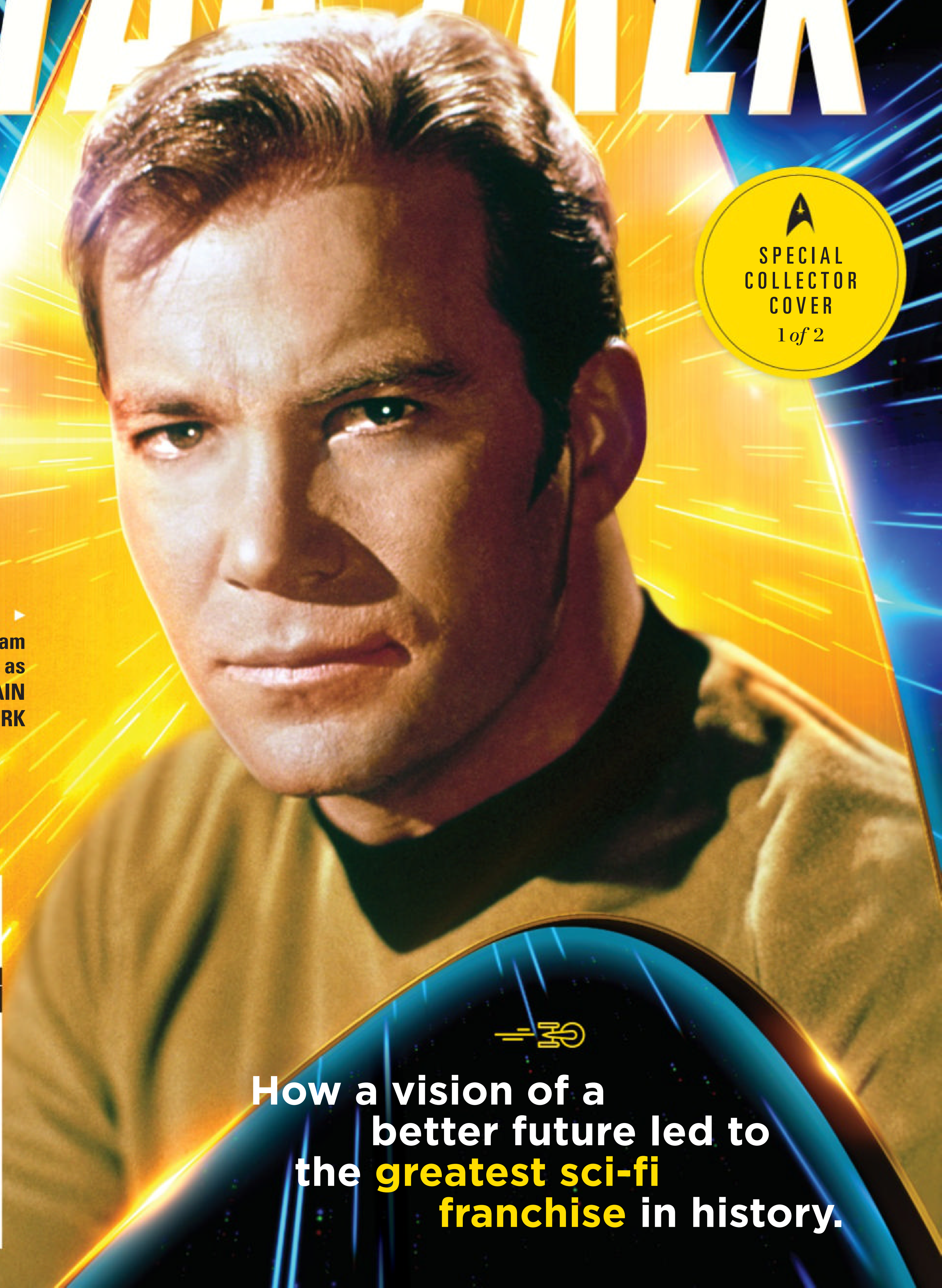

William Shatner as CAPTAIN KIRK

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STAR TREK

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STAR TREK

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STAR TREK

TO THE 23RD CENTURY… AND BEYOND

The year 2021 marks several *Star Trek* milestones: the 55th anniversary of the show's premier episode, the 90th birthdays of stars William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy, and the 100th of creater Gene Roddenberry

"Space. The final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before."

With these words, narrated by William Shatner at the beginning of an episode entitled "The Man Trap" that aired on September 8, 1966, *Star Trek* made its debut. And, at least in pop culture history, a phenomenon was born—though given the show's mediocre ratings throughout its three-year run on NBC, that fact would take some time to become a reality.

It was only after cancellation, and in the afterlife of syndicated reruns, that *Star Trek* truly found its audience—and vice versa. Once this bond was established, however, it would only grow stronger.

Today *Star Trek* encompasses nine TV series (with more to come), thirteen movies (with more to come), and hundreds of novels and comic books extending the voyages across mediums at warp speed. What is it about the original series that fostered such a passionate, loyal, and highly active fan base? And what was it about the show's message and meaning that has allowed it to span decades and bring aboard new fans with no end in sight?

Over the years, many have credited the show's imaginative, intelligent writing. Others have said it was the remarkable chemistry between the cast, particularly the three leads—Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, and DeForest Kelley. Undoubtedly, those were powerful factors. For actor George Takei, who, in the role of Lieutenant (eventually Captain) Sulu, has been associated with *Star Trek* almost from the beginning, the core appeal of the series is its optimism about the future of humanity—a perspective that feels as attractive today as it did 55 years ago.

"The 50s and the 60s were a turbulent time for America," says Takei. "We had the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we had the Vietnam War, with the United States being torn apart by those who passionately supported the war and those who were fiercely opposed to that war... . The President of the United States was assassinated, Dr. King was assassinated, the president's brother was assassinated. It was a horrific time."

Takei did not just observe what was going on back then—he was an activist, working to bring about positive change. "[Well before *Star Trek*], I was involved in the civil rights movement, I was involved in the peace movement," he explains. "I met Dr. King, I marched with him." Takei says he understood from the start that *Star Trek*, as envisioned by its creator and executive producer, Gene Roddenberry, existed to make an important statement: "We all, in our differences, have something essential to contribute to be able to move forward and build a better world. I was thrilled by that."

Takei also appreciated the series as "a steady employment opportunity," one not common in television back then for Asian-American actors, aside from stereotypical, race-based roles. For Takei, the character of Sulu was a refreshing change of pace—and a necessary one. "Not just for me as a young aspiring actor, but for me as an American and for our country."

Star Trek, Takei says, enabled him to be part of a show that advocated, through metaphor, for ideas, concepts, and issues that were important to him—and that also explored the technology of the future, some of which now exists today. For these reasons, he says, "I am so proud to have been associated with *Star Trek*."

As Roddenberry himself said in 1986, the year of *Star Trek*'s 20th anniversary, "Humans are capable of so much more than we yet understand. We're really something. ... For us, no limits."

GREAT PRIDE

For George Takei, Star Trek had something positive to offer for everyone.

EYES TO THE FUTURE

Above all else, show creator Gene Roddenberry (center) fiercely protected his vision of the show's message and meaning.

CHAPTER 1

GENE RODDENBERRY: A WRITER'S JOURNEY

The man who created *Star Trek* toiled away for years in the real world before pursuing the show that made him famous.

FRESH FACE
Gene Roddenberry, circa 1947, was a pilot and police officer who entered show business by chance.

Long before Eugene "Gene" Wesley Roddenberry launched the Starship Enterprise into the cosmos, he spent much of his time far above the ground. The native of El Paso, Texas, was born on August 19, 1921, and flew combat missions for the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II before becoming a commercial pilot for Pan American Airways after the war.

The man who would eventually be nicknamed "The Great Bird of the Galaxy" then opted for a completely earthbound career. He joined the Los Angeles Police Department in 1949, serving first as a patrolman and eventually as a traffic officer, leaving only his imagination to take flight. As it turned out, Roddenberry's true passion was writing—something his superiors at the LAPD took note of. He was moved to the Public Affairs office, where he wrote, among other things, press releases and speeches for the chief of police, William H. Parker.

The assignment was not enough to satisfy Roddenberry's creative spirit. But, working in the Public Affairs office, Roddenberry did interact with producers of police-themed TV dramas who were willing to pay the department for access to cases that could be used as story fodder for episodes. Roddenberry connected with Jack Webb, the producer and star of *Dragnet*, and Jon Epstein, head of the Story Department at Ziv Television Programs, which was responsible for a series called *Mr. District Attorney*. It was while visiting the set of that show, in his capacity as a police consultant providing comments on scripts, that Roddenberry reportedly told Epstein, "I can write scripts as good as this."

When offered a chance to prove it, Roddenberry wrote and sold his first teleplay to the show. Then he sold another. And another. Between 1954 and 1955, Roddenberry sold six scripts to *Mr. District Attorney*—not that anyone would know. Since the LAPD frowned upon its officers moonlighting, he had to write his scripts under a pseudonym, "Robert Wesley." Looking back on the work years later, Roddenberry didn't hold it in particularly high regard, but he valued the experience.

"They were very bad shows," he told author Stephen E. Whitfield in 1968, for the book, *The Making of Star Trek*, "which was fine, because they didn't require much knowledge or ability in order to sell a script, and in the meantime you learned about writing."

More assignments came Roddenberry's way for shows like *Highway Patrol*, *I Led Three Lives* and *West Point*. It was during this period that Roddenberry took his first stab at writing TV science fiction: a script called "The Secret Weapon of 117," which aired as an episode of *Chevron Hall of Stars* in March 1956. Starring Ricardo Montalban—an actor who would later become iconic to *Star Trek* fans as Khan Noonien Singh— the story focused on an alien couple visiting Earth. Roddenberry's writing career was taking off and, by 1956, he was able to leave the LAPD to focus on writing full time.

JUST THE FACTS

While working in the Public Affairs office of the LAPD, Roddenberry met producers of popular TV shows like Jack Webb of *Dragnet.*

"[COP SHOWS] DIDN'T REQUIRE MUCH KNOWLEDGE OR ABILITY IN ORDER TO SELL A SCRIPT, AND IN THE MEANTIME YOU LEARNED ABOUT WRITING."

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LEARNING THE GAME

Roddenberry's success working for the show *Have Gun—Will Travel* showed that he could be a full-time TV writer and, possibly, even more.

Roddenberry's decision was destined to change his life for the better. But, in the short term, choosing to leave a stable and secure job for the life of a Hollywood screenwriter put a great strain on his already-troubled marriage to his wife, Eileen.

Perhaps feuled by the need to prove that he made the right call, Roddenberry established a long-running relationship with the producers of the Western series *Have Gun—Will Travel*. He wrote 24 episodes for the show and won a Writer's Guild Award in the category of Best Western for his script "Helen of Abajinian."

Roddenberry was also in demand to write for other popular shows like *Naked City* and *Dr. Kildare*. As the credits piled up, Roddenberry's experience and confidence in his abilities grew. He soon felt the next logical step to expand his career would be to create and produce a show of his own.

"When a writer begins to hit well as a freelance writer, he rapidly develops new strengths and abilities," he told Whitfield. "If lucky, he becomes very much in demand. He can pick up a phone and have an assignment any time he wants. Eventually the realization begins to set in that, although he knows the business and is doing well at it, he is still doing piecework. If he stops writing, the money stops coming in. The money may be great, but there is damned little security in it for his family. In television, the only way to get that security is to own a piece of the action. To own a series so that when there are royalties and profits someday, you will have them."

The reasoning was certainly practical. But Roddenberry's decision to create a show wasn't just about financial security. It was also a way to ensure that his creative ideas would have the best chance of reaching an audience without compromise. As Roddenberry told Whitfield, after writing several pilots that were produced by other people and didn't sell, he came to understand that "if you want the film to reflect accurately what you felt when you wrote the script, then you have to produce it too."

Roddenberry likened producing in television to storytelling, in that it's up to the producer to choose the right actors, costumes, pace, and more. "These are as much a part of storytelling as writing out that same description of a character in a novel," he told Whitfield.

As a new creator/producer, Roddenberry soon developed a series of pilots, primarily police and legal dramas. None sold, though some came close. Finally, in 1963, while working for MGM, he managed to place a series on the air: *The Lieutenant*, a military drama starring Gary Lockwood and focusing on members of the U.S. Marine Corps during peacetime.

At the helm of *The Lieutenant*, Roddenberry made a point of not shying away from tough subjects—in particular, the ugliness of racism, which was the focus of one episode, "To Set it Right." That episode, and Roddenberry's refusal to abandon it, cost the series the support of the U.S. Pentagon and put him at odds with the network, NBC. Apparently, it was hard to avoid compromises even as a show creator.

The Lieutenant was canceled after one season, but it put a number of actors on Roddenberry's radar—men and women who would later become central to *Star Trek*: Leonard Nimoy (Spock), Nichelle Nichols (Uhura), Walter Koenig (Chekov), and Majel Barrett (Number One, and eventually Gene's second wife.).

As *The Lieutenant* wound down, Roddenberry set out to create a new series. He wanted his next TV project to be science-fiction. But, in an era when the genre could mean something silly or campy, he wanted to treat the work seriously and with as much emphasis on human drama and top-notch storytelling as any high-quality show on the air at that time.

Pitching the basic concept as "*Wagon Train* to the stars," a reference to the popular TV western, Roddenberry first went to MGM. The studio passed. Undeterred, Roddenberry was now on a mission: To boldly go where no television series had gone before. The challenge was finding a studio that would allow him try.

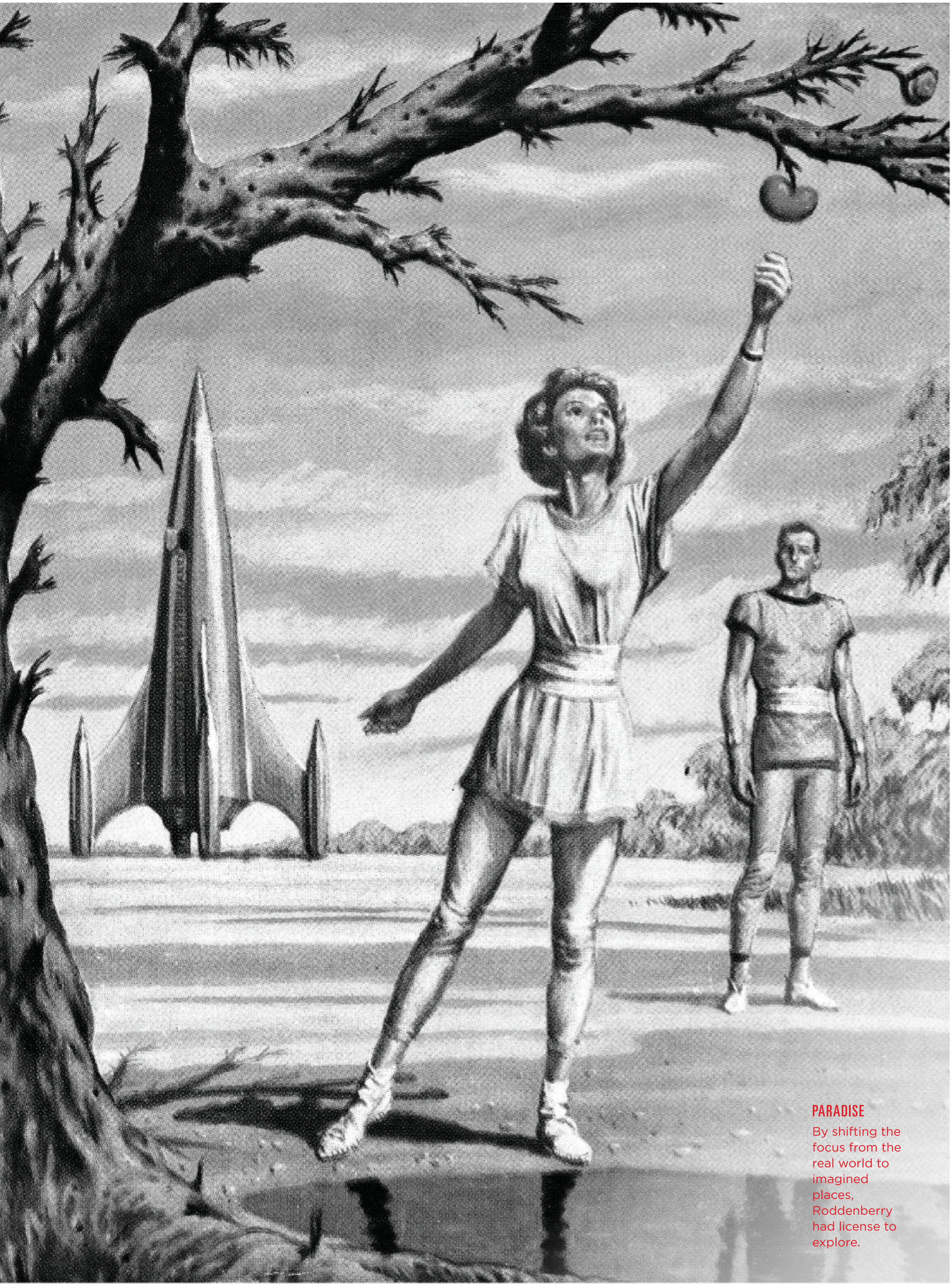
ONE AND DONE
As a producer, Roddenberry's first show only lasted one season. But stars like Gary Lockwood (below) would prove to be excellent contacts for his next program.

STAR TREK

CHAPTER 2

CREATING THE ENTERPRISE

Roddenberry's vision was built from many influences—including literature, the movies, television and America in the 1960s



PARADISE

By shifting the focus from the real world to imagined places, Roddenberry had license to explore.

RONTIER
M & SALOON
HOTEL
HELLDORA

FACTORY SYSTEM
Filming TV Westerns was easy (and cheap) in the 1960s, because all the sets had already been built in Hollywood for movies.

Gene Roddenberry's interest in science fiction dated back to his teens, when a friend loaned him an issue of the science fiction magazine *Astounding Stories*. Launched in 1930, the publication ran early works of writers like Isaac Asimov, A.E. van Vogt, and Robert A. Heinlein—each of whom went on to become a giant in the genre.

Roddenberry understood the distinction between science fiction and fantasy. As he observed, good science fiction extrapolates on what exists currently or could exist in the future. It is grounded by what is at least theoretically possible. Fantasy, however, is essentially rooted in magic and the supernatural, presenting the seemingly impossible with nary an explanation or a theory behind how it's happening. Roddenberry was determined that his next TV series be strictly science fiction, not fantasy, with a set of ground rules and principles to give the stories credibility.

He was well aware that his concept was going to be a tough sell. From a production standpoint, science fiction was a costly proposition for television because it required special effects, unusual sets, and unique costumes—all on an ongoing basis—or else it looked cheap and unremarkable. In the era before computer graphics, the most economically efficient TV shows to produce were ones that could be filmed on existing Hollywood movie sets, which explains why there were so many Westerns on TV. There was also the fact that many Hollywood executives didn't quite "get" science fiction, or take it seriously. It was therefore essential, Roddenberry knew, for his stories to follow the basic rules of drama, so that as far-out as the particulars may get, audiences could still relate to the core situations and identify with the characters.

In telling these stories, Roddenberry had no intention of shying away from the important topics of his time. He wanted to explore sex and how men and women relate to each other—just as the sexual revolution was happening in the United States; the horrors and futility of war—as the conflict in Vietnam was escalating; the need for understanding and empathy for others who may be different from you in appearance or background—right in the midst of the civil rights movement; the inherent dangers of authority and conformity; and the role and nature of God. All were potentially hot-button issues.

As an admirer of the work of satirist Jonathan Swift, Roddenberry recognized the storytelling opportunities of working in an otherworldly setting. He faced backlash from the Pentagon and NBC when he addressed racism within the U.S. military on *The Lieutenant*. But what if he confronted controversial subjects in an allegorical manner—disguising his commentary behind a facade of the fantastical?

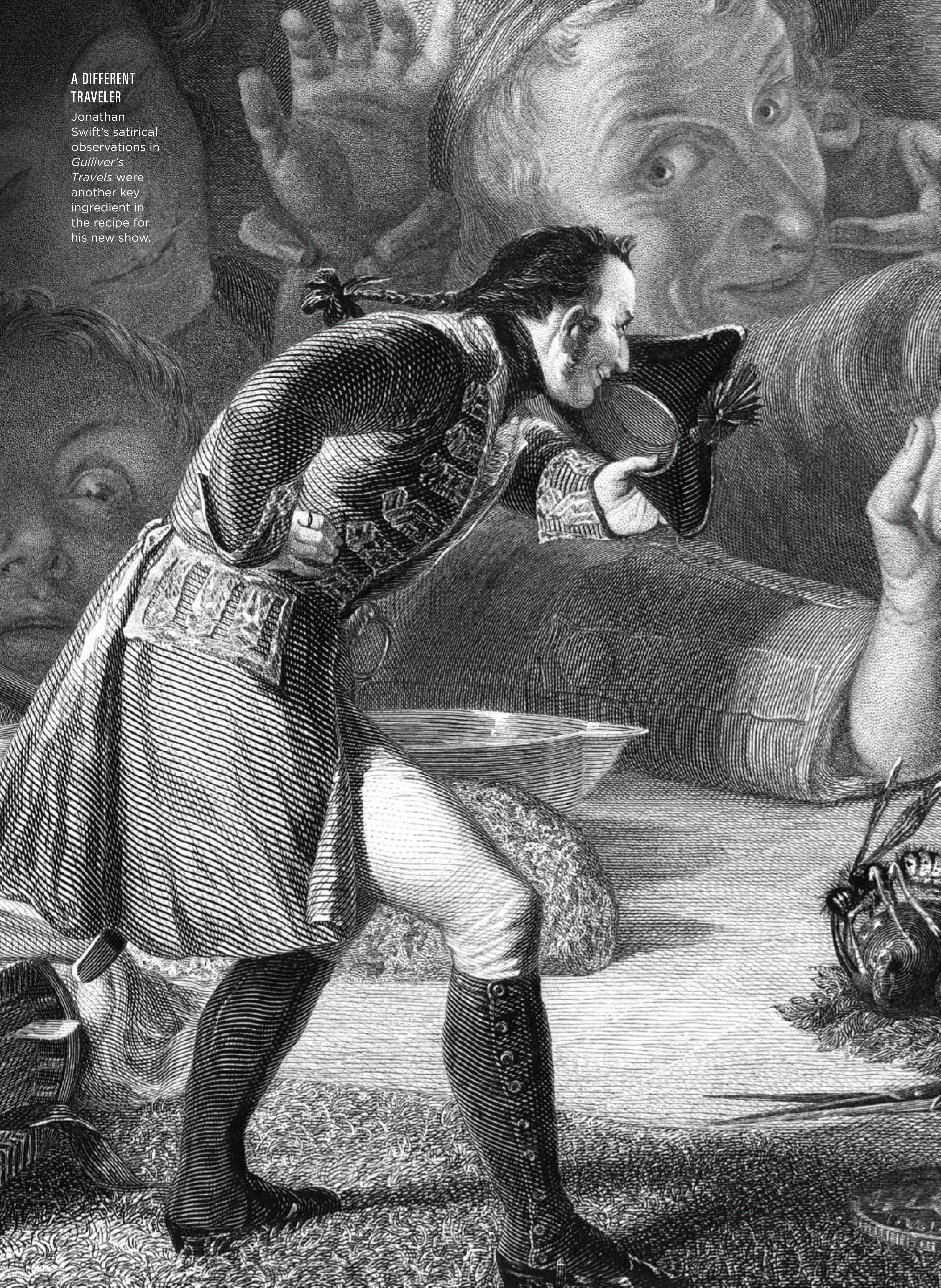
"Jonathan Swift wanted to write about his times, but he would have had his head chopped off if he talked about stupid kings and queens, crooked prime ministers and all of that," Roddenberry told *Starlog* magazine in 1986. "He decided to create a place where he could talk about such things—and get away with it. So, he created *Gulliver's Travels*. I started thinking, 'Well, maybe if I could have all my stories happen on far off planets, then I could talk about all those things I wanted to talk about.'"

It was high-minded stuff. But Roddenberry also wanted to tell exciting action-adventure stories—the kind of tales that would keep audiences entertained and engaged. He worked all of these thoughts and intentions into a 16-page series pitch, dated March 11, 1964—the first major document written about the concept that Roddenberry had come to call *Star Trek*.

In his pitch, Roddenberry noted that *Star Trek* would be the first action-adventure-science fiction TV series "with strong central lead characters plus other continuing regulars." That set it apart from previous science fiction shows like *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*, which were anthologies that featured different casts and characters, as well as unrelated stories, from episode to episode. But while Roddenberry envisioned *Star Trek* having a "central location and regular cast," it would also explore a range of "human experiences."

EARLY INFLUENCE

Science-fiction writers like Isaac Asimov, shown here in 1974, made a lasting impression on a young Gene Roddenberry.



A DIFFERENT TRAVELER

Jonathan Swift's satirical observations in *Gulliver's Travels* were another key ingredient in the recipe for his new show.

T

To that end, the series would adopt the *Wagon Train* approach of having notable guest stars as the focus of individual episodes, whether they portrayed characters who worked with the regulars at the familiar central location—in this case, the space cruiser he called the S.S. Yorktown—or alien beings that the vessel encountered.

To address budget concerns, Roddenberry detailed what he called the “Parallel Worlds” concept. He suggested that each new world visited in the series would be, more or less, like our own. “It means simply that our stories deal with plant and animal life, plus people, quite similar to that on Earth,” he wrote. “Social evolution will also have interesting points of similarity with ours. There will be differences, of course, ranging from the subtle to the boldly dramatic, out of which comes much of our color and excitement.”

To bring his point home, Roddenberry added, “The ‘Parallel Worlds’ concept makes production practical by permitting action-adventure science fiction at a practical budget figure via the use of available ‘earth’ casting, sets, locations, costuming, and so on.” He also made the case that his plan would keep “even the most imaginative stories within the general audience’s frame of reference through such recognizable and identifiable casting, sets, and costuming.”

As for the continuing regular characters, they would be serving aboard the Yorktown on a five-year mission of exploration, scientific investigation, and interstellar security. At the center of it all: Captain Robert M. April, described in the pitch as a 34-year-old “space-age Captain Horatio Hornblower”—thus revealing the fictional British Naval hero from C.S. Forester’s novels as another one of Roddenberry’s

“ACTION-ADVENTURE SCIENCE FICTION AT A PRACTICAL BUDGET FIGURE.”

THE COMPETITION
Roddenberry's new show would be different from past sci-fi programs like *The Outer Limits* because it would have an ongoing cast and story.

THE CAPTAIN
The anchor for Roddenberry's adventure was described as a "space-age Horatio Hornblower."

inspirations. April's unnamed female executive officer, who was never to be referred to as anything other than "Number One," would be portrayed as "expressionless [and] cool," and prove to be "an extraordinarily efficient officer" who was likely "April's superior in detailed knowledge of the multiple equipment systems, departments, and crew members aboard the vessel."

The ship's navigator, a native of South America named José Ortegas, would be "full of both humor and Latin temperament." The ship's doctor, 51-year-old Phillip "Bones" Boyce, was described as a "worldly, humorously cynical" medical officer who "considers himself the only realist" on the ship and serves as Captain April's "only real confidant."

The captain's yeoman, a blonde woman named Colt, would serve as April's "secretary, reporter, [and] bookkeeper." The character description adds that she "undoubtedly wishes she could serve him in more personal departments," and notes that "she is not dumb; she is very female, disturbingly so." (The description is totally inappropriate today, but TV executives wouldn't have batted an eye in the mid-1960s.)

Finally, there is Mr. Spock, the ship's First Lieutenant. "Probably half Martian, he has a slightly reddish complexion and semi-pointed ears," and "a face so heavy-lidded and satanic you might almost expect him to have a forked tail." As April's right-hand, Mr. Spock would be "the working level commander of all the ship's functions from manning the bridge to supervising the lowliest scrub detail." The pitch also stated that "his primary weakness is an almost cat-like curiosity over anything the slightest 'alien.'"

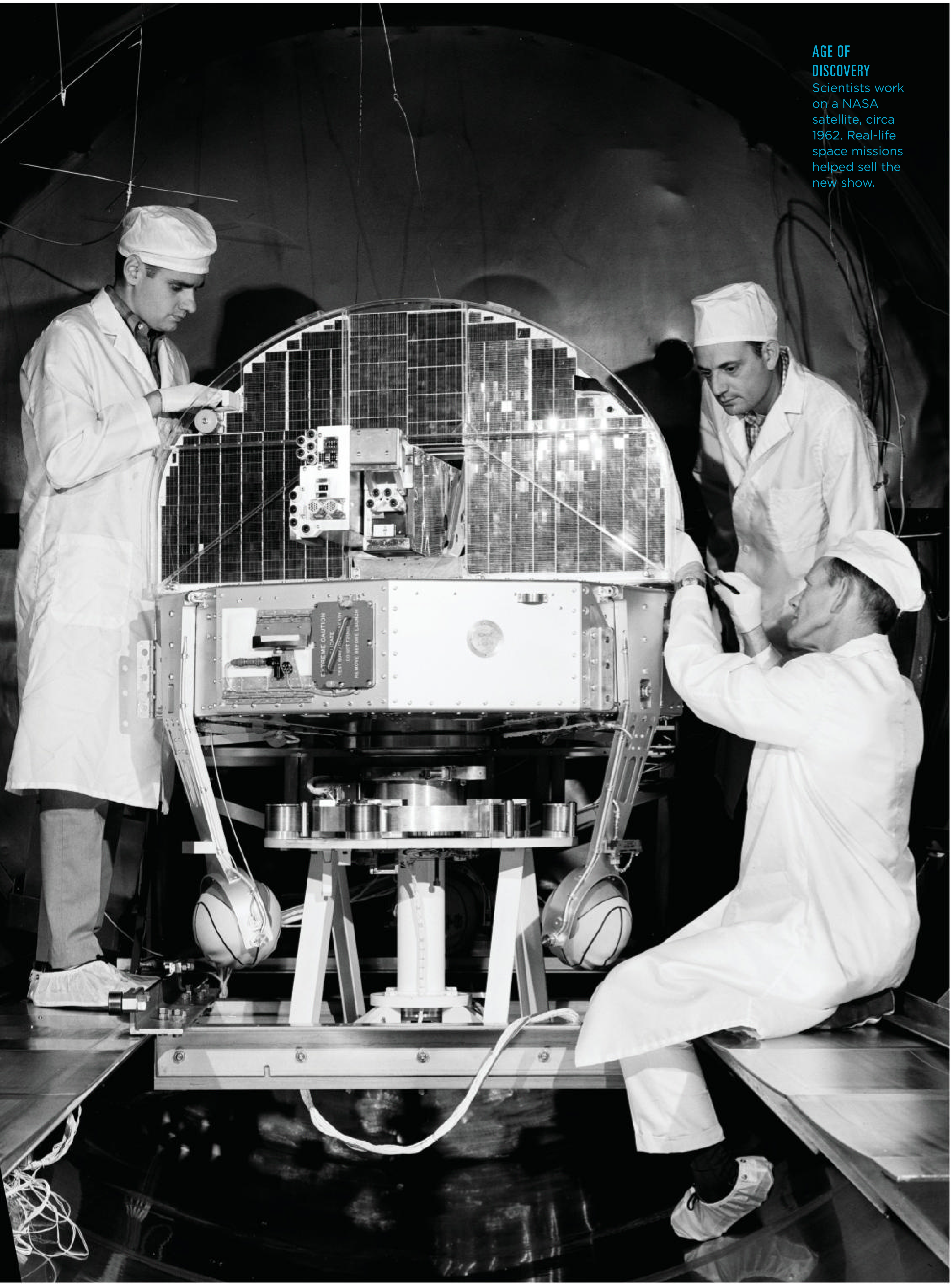
The names aren't all familiar, but the general concept was definitely *Star Trek*. Yet when Roddenberry shopped it around Hollywood, there wasn't a deal to be had. That is until Roddenberry got a meeting at a studio that needed a hit and was desperate to do something different.

STAR TREK

CHAPTER 3

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

Gene Roddenberry's groundbreaking show might never have been made without the help of scientists, TV executives, and an iconic comedienne



AGE OF DISCOVERY
Scientists work on a NASA satellite, circa 1962. Real-life space missions helped sell the new show.

By 1964, Desilu Productions had seen better days. Its co-founders, Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball, had divorced four years earlier, and Ball was running the studio on her own, having bought out her ex-husband in 1962. Despite having launched the classic TV series *I Love Lucy* and *The Untouchables* in the 1950s, Desilu was now floundering as a major entertainment force, its reputation in decline. The studio had sunk a fortune into numerous TV pilots that didn't sell, and it had not produced a successful new series in quite a while. The only thing Desilu really had going for it at the time, creatively, was Ball's sitcom, *The Lucy Show*, which aired on CBS. Other than that, the studio was surviving primarily by renting out their studio space and facilities to other production companies.

For Desilu to turn around its fortunes, it needed to get a new series on the air—ideally, one that was different and innovative and intriguing enough to make a splash and raise the studio's profile. To that end, Desilu brought in former CBS executive Oscar Katz to serve as executive vice president in charge of television production. Katz in turn hired an old CBS colleague of his, who had since gone over to NBC, Herbert F. Solow, to oversee series development, pilots, and network relations.

Tasked by Ball herself to "get some shows for the studio," Solow met with Gene Roddenberry in April 1964 to hear his pitch for *Star Trek*. Having worked on enough shows to know that a pitch meeting was always hard to judge, Roddenberry was ready for any outcome. But the meeting went reasonably well and resulted in Desilu signing Roddenberry to a script development deal. (Around the same time, Solow also signed a deal with writer-producer-director Bruce Geller to develop another show that he

"[IF] WE MAKE THE PILOT, YOU CAN ALWAYS RUN IT AS A TV SPECIAL...."

LUCILLE BALL

THE BOSS
"America's favorite redhead" was also the head of the studio that took a big chance on Gene Roddenberry.

thought could give the studio a boost: a spy thriller called *Mission: Impossible*.)

Solow felt that Roddenberry's pitch needed work. The "Wagon Train to the stars" aspect wasn't quite gelling for him. He also believed that the main characters needed more development. But before revisions could be made, and unbeknownst to Solow, Katz set up a meeting for himself and Roddenberry at CBS to discuss *Star Trek* with the network's top executives. For two hours, the executives pumped Roddenberry for his thoughts on how to do a science fiction show effectively on a TV budget. They also asked questions about the technical challenges, Roddenberry's proposed approach to design elements, and how he planned to develop stories. In short, it was a grilling. Roddenberry managed the inquisition as best he could, was thanked for his time, and then was told by the CBS executives that they already had a science fiction show in the works, and had no need for another one. That show turned out to be *Lost in Space*.

Roddenberry was known to sometimes flare a nasty temper, and he was not pleased. As he recalled to Stephen E. Whitfield in 1968, "My attitude was, 'You S.O.B.'s, why didn't you tell me that after the first ten minutes?' If you want technical advice and help, hire me and pay me for it!'" Following the disappointing CBS meeting, Solow and Roddenberry huddled and refined the *Star Trek* concept. Solow suggested what ultimately became the "captain's log" narration, as he recognized the need for a storytelling device to provide essential information to the audience without getting bogged down in exposition. Once the pitch was suitably revised, Solow set up a meeting for himself and Roddenberry at his old stomping grounds, NBC, in May 1964.

Solow knew that NBC was aiming to be the "full-color network," and that *Star Trek* would be perfect in color. It also helped that he knew the two NBC executives that they'd be pitching.

PITCH IMPERFECT
Roddenberry answered many detailed questions about producing a space show for CBS execs, only to be told the network was doing *Lost in Space* (above).

ON TO NBC
Grant Tinker, shown left with wife Mary Tyler Moore in 1967, helped *Star Trek* find a home.

The meeting was with Vice President of Programs (West Coast) Grant Tinker and Program Development Vice President Jerry Stanley, both friends and former colleagues. (Tinker had even been Solow's boss just before Solow joined Desilu.)

Despite the pre-existing relationships, the pitch did not result in a clear "go." Tinker and Stanley expressed misgivings about *Star Trek*'s commercial viability and its potential to appeal to a wide audience. Still, Solow was able to convince the pair to at least commission a script for a 90-minute pilot. "[If] we make the pilot, you can always run it as a TV special and recoup your investment if it doesn't sell as a series," Solow told them, according to his account in the 1996 book, *Inside Star Trek: The Real Story*.

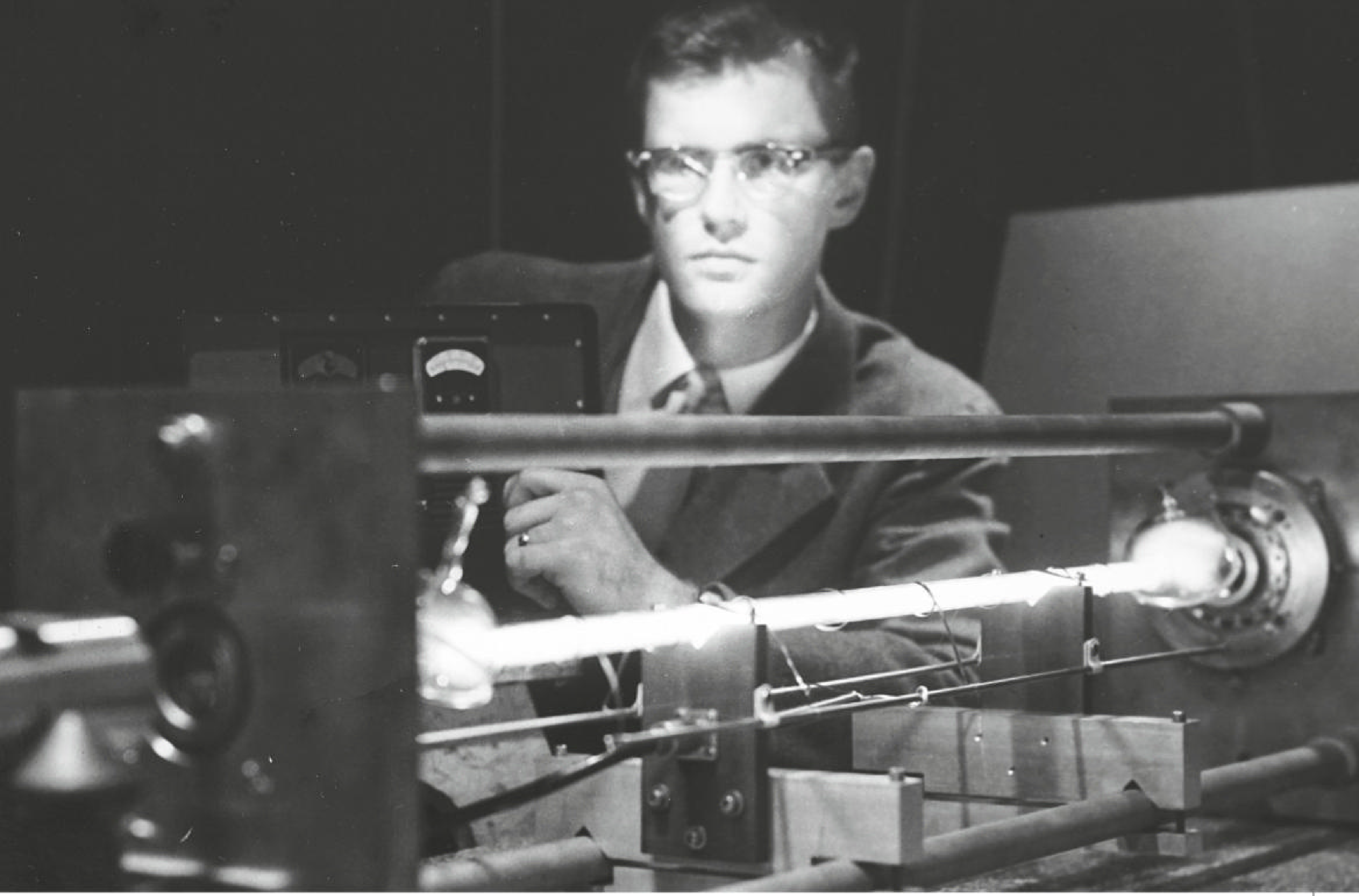
Roddenberry received $20,000 to develop three story ideas for NBC to consider for the pilot. The network chose a story titled, "The Cage," and Roddenberry turned it into a full script. By that point, he had already changed one important detail about his concept: The S.S. Yorktown was now the U.S.S. Enterprise.

Roddenberry submitted his first-draft script of "The Cage" by the end of September. Within days, NBC committed to shoot it as a series pilot. However, the network also requested several rounds of changes, which Roddenberry made—albeit grudgingly, according to Solow.

Lucille Ball had been mostly uninvolved with the project that was being counted on to help save her studio. According to Solow, she was under the impression that *Star Trek* was set in the South Seas and would focus on USO entertainers visiting the troops during World War II. After Solow set her straight, he gave her Roddenberry's script, and solicited her feedback, assuring her that any changes she wanted would be implemented. Neither she nor Oscar Katz ever weighed in, trusting Solow enough to let him do his job unimpeded. As Solow commented in *Inside Star Trek*, "Could anyone have had better bosses than Lucy and Oscar?"

Well before the pilot was a certainty, Roddenberry had recruited physicist Harvey Lynn of the RAND Corporation—a noted scientific think tank—to serve as a technical consultant. In a letter to Lynn, Roddenberry

"[THE SHOW SHOULD REMAIN] ENOUGH IN ACCORD WITH THE LAWS OF PHYSICS THAT SCIENTISTS CAN ENJOY THE PROGRAM, TOO."



INVENTING NEW TECHNOLOGY

In the real world, lasers like the one shown above, were cutting-edge tech in the 1960s. *Star Trek* projected the idea into the future to come up with phasers.

expressed that he wanted Star Trek to remain "enough in accord with the laws of physics that scientists can enjoy the program, too." Lynn worked with Roddenberry when it came time to review the designs for the Enterprise developed by art director Pato Guzman and, in particular, set designer Walter "Matt" Jefferies.

"We didn't want the Enterprise to look like something currently planned for our space program," Jefferies told Stephen E. Whitfield in 1968. "We had to base it all on fairly solid scientific concepts, project it into the future, and try to visualize what the fourth, fifth, or tenth generation of present-day equipment would look like." Lynn made several suggestions to improve the design of the Enterprise, one of which led to the addition of a rear shuttle bay with sliding doors. (Lynn's input also resulted in the eventual introduction of phasers as the show's primary weaponry, rather than lasers, which already existed in real life and presumably would have a different name centuries in the future.)

Filming for the *Star Trek* pilot was ready to move ahead, despite concerns expressed by Desilu's board of directors. Some top executives warned Lucille Ball that if *Star Trek* went to series, Desilu could expect to lose about $65,000 an episode. One executive, Ed Holly, told her that if *Star Trek* and *Mission: Impossible* both became series, Desilu would go bankrupt and ultimately would have to be sold because the shows were simply too expensive to produce.

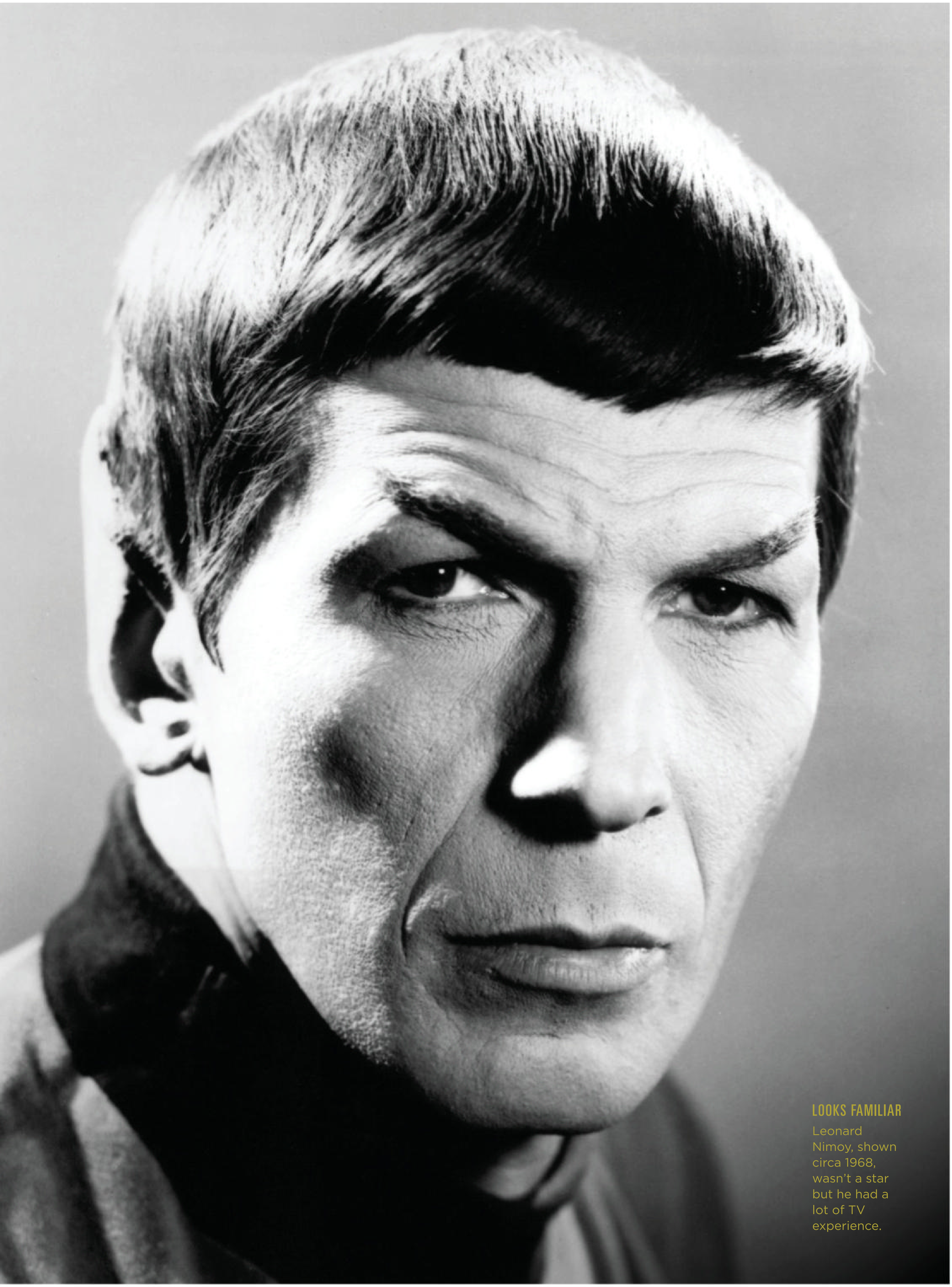
Despite the dire warnings, Ball sided with Katz and Solow. The two executives expressed faith in both shows and argued that if they became hits, there would be revenue from syndication deals, foreign sales, and merchandising. As Holly noted in 1993, "If it were not for Lucy, there would be no *Star Trek* today."

Against the odds, *Star Trek* was ready to launch. Now it was up to Roddenberry to prove that his vision would connect with TV audiences.

CHAPTER 4

LEONARD NIMOY: FROM BOSTON TO VULCAN

The character of Mr. Spock would appear to be the most difficult crew member to cast, but Gene Roddenberry found the perfect actor for the role with relative ease



LOOKS FAMILIAR
Leonard Nimoy, shown circa 1968, wasn't a star but he had a lot of TV experience.

OFFICIAL

As “The Cage” moved towards production, Gene Roddenberry was faced with a challenging question: Who could portray the characters that had, up until that point, existed only in his imagination? When it came to the alien Mr. Spock, Roddenberry knew who he wanted early on.

Leonard Nimoy was not exactly a household name in 1964. The son of Jewish immigrants who had escaped from Russia and settled in Boston, Nimoy was born on March 26, 1931, and took to acting as a child. He decided to pursue it as a career when was 17, but when he told his parents of his intention to study drama at the Pasadena Playhouse, they were grief-stricken, according to Nimoy in his 1995 memoir, *I Am Spock*. Neither his father Max, a barbershop owner, nor his mother Dora, a housewife, considered acting a sensible career. “You’ll have to do it without any help from us,” they told him, making it abundantly clear that he could not count on them for tuition money. Undeterred, Nimoy took a job selling vacuum cleaners, earning enough to buy a train ticket to California in 1949.

In 1952, he got his first big acting break when he starred as the title character in a low-budget movie called *Kid Monk Baroni*, about the rise, fall, and redemption of a young boxer. While the review in Variety called the film “forgettable,” it described Nimoy as “a capable juve who merits attention.” That same year, he also had a role in the 12-chapter movie serial, *Zombies of the Stratosphere*, in which he played a Martian who was part of a plot to invade Earth and blast it out of its orbit so that Mars could take its place.

Neither role kicked Nimoy’s career into high gear. By 1956, he was married and the father of two small children, with no steady income from acting. Having inherited his parents’ commitment to hard work, he scrambled to take on odd jobs. Over the next few years, those jobs included servicing fish tanks in doctor’s offices, working in a pet store, driving a cab, and managing an apartment building.

Nimoy did not want to give up his dream of being a full-time professional actor, however. He had long since accepted that with his lean frame and grave face, he was not likely to get traditional leading-man parts. As he told *People* magazine in 1977, “I never dreamed I could be a star. I just wanted to do good work.” Movie roles were scarce, but Nimoy began to land numerous jobs on television. Between 1956 and 1964, he racked up more than 60 TV acting credits, appearing in episodes of series that included *West Point*, *Harbor Command*, *Highway Patrol*, *Dragnet*, *Sea Hunt*, *Bonanza*, *Rawhide*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Untouchables*, *Wagon Train*, *Perry Mason*, *The Outer Limits*, and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* (in which he shared the screen with future co-star William Shatner). But it was Nimoy’s appearance on Roddenberry’s *The Lieutenant* that proved to be most pivotal for his career.

FAMILY FIRST
Nimoy, shown at a Hollywood event with son Adam circa 1966, took on many odd jobs to support his family before landing *Star Trek*.

“FOR SOMETHING LIKE [MR. SPOCK], YOU NEED A GOOD ACTOR WHO IS KIND OF STRANGE LOOKING…”

JACK BRODER PRODUCTIONS presents
The BILLY GOAT GANG
in KID MONK BARONI
Starring RICHARD ROBER BRUCE CABOT ALLENE ROBERTS MONA KNOX
and Introducing LEONARD NIMOY as Kid Monk
Associate Producer, HERMAN COHEN
Directed by HAROLD SCHUSTER
A JACK BRODER PRODUCTION

BREAKTHROUGH One of Nimoy's earliest roles was in the 1952 film *Kid Monk Baroni*. Despite promising reviews, Nimoy found his steadiest work in television.

With his performance in an episode titled "In the Highest Tradition," Nimoy made an impression on both the show's star, Gary Lockwood, and its creator-producer, Roddenberry. In the years following *Star Trek*'s debut, Roddenberry said that he had always had Nimoy in mind for the role of Mr. Spock. Lockwood, however, claims to be the one who put Nimoy on the radar.

"[Nimoy] got the part because of *me*," Lockwood said in a 2018 interview. "Roddenberry, after we did *The Lieutenant*, had me over to his house for a meal… he had a big home in Holmby Hills, so we went out with a snifter of brandy and we each had a cigarette and we were [drunk and] looking out at the lights of the city and he got kind of nostalgic and he tells me about his new idea for a pilot. He says to me, 'I have this character,' and he kind of explains Spock, he does a thumbnail sketch. Then he says, 'So who do you think I should get to play that character?' And I said, 'For something like that, you need a good actor who's kind of strange-looking.' And he said, 'Well, you've worked with thousands of actors, who do you think?' And I said, 'I remember there was this guy [who appeared on *The Lieutenant*], a Jewish guy, he was really good." Lockwood then struggled to recall the actor's name. "I said, 'I remember now, his name is Leonard!' And Roddenberry goes, 'Nimoy?' I said, 'Yeah, that's the guy!'"

Regardless of whether the casting idea originated with Lockwood or Lockwood simply reinforced what Roddenberry was already thinking, the call went out to Leonard Nimoy soon after. Nimoy met with Roddenberry to discuss the *Star Trek* pilot, expecting to audition. Instead, according to Nimoy, Roddenberry used the time to sell him on the concept and the Spock character.

Nimoy had concerns. But, as he wrote in *I Am Spock*, "The thought of… a regular income was very appealing."

STARDOM Nimoy was concerned Mr. Spock might become a joke. But at the peak of fame, he did cut an album.

VOX

THE FINAL FRONTIER
Nimoy played a major role in developing the Spock character once the show went to series.

Nimoy's biggest concern was that the part, and the show, might turn out to be "a bad sci-fi joke." He was especially sensitive about the pointed ears that would be a key part of his physical appearance—and rightfully so, since the earliest test versions of the ear appliances made him look like an "overgrown jackrabbit" and an "elf with an overactive thyroid." Snickers and mocking comments from members of the production crew did not help matters. Nimoy expressed his misgivings to Roddenberry, who told him, "I know you can make this character work." Based on Roddenberry's confidence, and a pair of ear appliances designed by makeup artist Fred Phillips that actually looked good on him, Nimoy was able to embrace the role.

"I NEVER HAD A JOB THAT LASTED LONGER THAN TWO WEEKS."

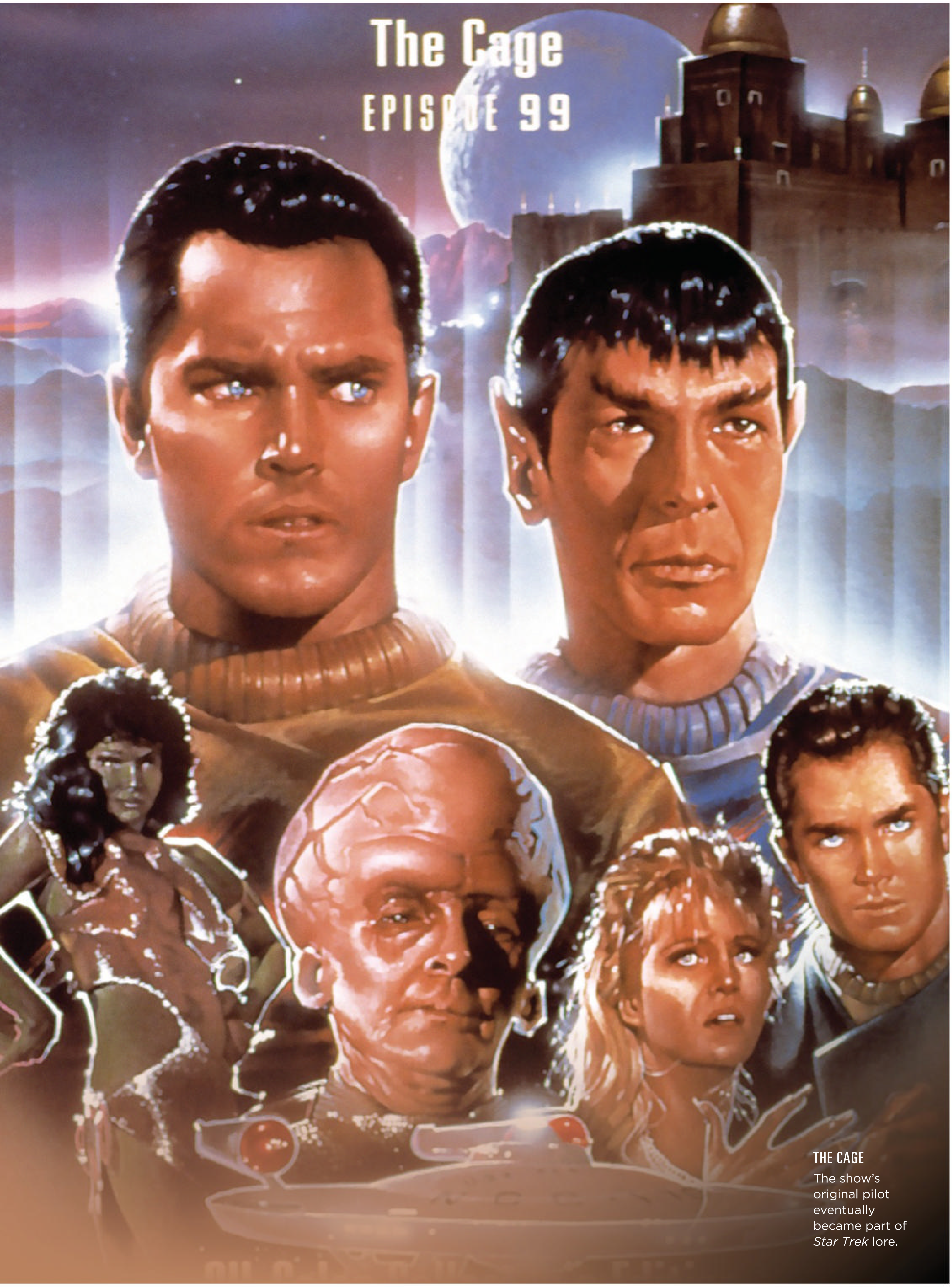
Not that the character was fully developed. In "The Cage," Spock's background is never addressed—he's never identified as a Vulcan or any other alien species. He is also not the emotionally repressed, logic-embracing figure the world would come to know and love. In "The Cage," Spock is visibly eager to discover new wonders, and smiles freely when he does so. He is even prone to emotional outbursts. As established in Roddenberry's original pitch, it is Number One, the female second-in-command, who is cold, analytical, and dispassionate. Nevertheless, as conceived by Roddenberry, there was a rich internal life for Spock that gave the character vast potential if the pilot went to series. In time, Nimoy would play a large role in guiding that character exploration, investing Spock with abilities, customs, and behaviors that would help elevate the character to unexpected heights.

But, in 1964, Nimoy was simply glad to have a gig. In his dreams, it would become a weekly series. As he told Shatner in a video conversation in 2001, "Prior to *Star Trek*, I never had a [movie or TV] job that lasted longer than two weeks." That was all about to change, in ways that proved to be both good and inconvenient.

CHAPTER 5

MAIDEN VOYAGE

The first pilot for *Star Trek* was not picked up. But Roddenberry's vision was compelling enough to earn a second chance to get things right and make it to air


The Cage
EPISODE 99

THE CAGE
The show's original pilot eventually became part of *Star Trek* lore.

F

Filming on "The Cage" began on November 27, 1964, with director Robert Butler at the helm. Jeffrey Hunter, best known for his film roles in *The Searchers* and *King of Kings*, was cast as the captain of the Enterprise, whose name was changed from Robert April to Christopher Pike. The female second-in-command, Number One, was played by Majel Barrett. John Hoyt portrayed Dr. Boyce. Ship's navigator José Ortegas, renamed José Tyler, was played by Peter Duryea. Laurel Goodwin was cast as Yeoman Colt. And Leonard Nimoy played Mr. Spock.

While Star Trek would become known for promoting racial and cultural diversity, that element of the series was not so obvious in "The Cage." With the exception of Spock and an Asian transporter technician, the characters are all visibly Caucasian—including Tyler, who has blond hair and blue eyes.

The script, written by Gene Roddenberry, involves the Enterprise responding to a distress signal from the unexplored planet Talos IV. Arriving there, the crew members encounter a race of telepaths who capture Pike and attempt to control him through powerful illusions—and by pairing him with a mysterious and beautiful woman named Vina, played by guest star Susan Oliver (who donned green full-body makeup to play an Orion dancer in what is probably the pilot's most iconic scene). From there, "The Cage" explores the temptation of choosing endless—albeit illusory—wish-fulfillment over reality.

Hunter's Captain Pike is a serious, no-nonsense leader, and at a personal crossroads; when we first meet him, he's worn out, dispirited, and considering retirement. As in Roddenberry's original pitch, the only crew member with whom he seems to have a personal rapport is Dr. Boyce. It's only at the end of the episode, once Pike has resolved his inner turmoil, that he loosens up a bit and shows just the slightest hint of humor.

NBC was impressed with "The Cage," but rejected the pilot nonetheless. The most-cited reason, perpetuated over the ensuing years by Roddenberry, was that the

THE FIRST CAPTAIN

Jeffrey Hunter did not choose to stay with the show, but his character, Captain Pike, would return.

STRANGE NEW WORLDS

Reportedly deemed "too cerebral," the original pilot is still well remembered by fans.

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network executives felt it was “too cerebral.” To some extent, that is fair and true. But according to Herbert F. Solow in *Inside Star Trek*, the network was also concerned about the eroticism on display, particularly the green dancer Vina. In addition, the executives concluded that the story—despite the acknowledged fact that they themselves had chosen it—was not a good enough showcase for *Star Trek*’s potential as a weekly series.

In recognition of that potential, NBC did something unprecedented at the time: it ordered a second pilot. But not without some major retooling.

The network had no issues with Jeffrey Hunter, but wanted most of the crew recast, particularly Number One. Roddenberry claimed repeatedly in the decades that followed that NBC objected to a woman being Pike’s first officer, but Solow insisted that the network executives simply didn’t think Majel Barrett was well-suited for the role. Dropping her put Roddenberry in a very uncomfortable position—Barrett was his mistress at the time.

NBC was also deeply concerned about Spock, whose satanic appearance they feared would offend viewers in the Bible Belt. Roddenberry, backed by Solow, strongly resisted getting rid of the character, convinced that Spock would be a key ingredient for *Star Trek*’s success if it became a series. In a clever move to retain as much of his original vision as possible, Roddenberry revised the character by essentially merging him with the characteristics of Number One. As Roddenberry would later tell it, “I gave the stoicism of the female officer to Spock, and married the actress who played Number One. Thank God it wasn’t the other way around. I mean Leonard’s cute, but...”

> “GENE SAID THE ENTERPRISE WAS A METAPHOR FOR STARSHIP EARTH.”

PIECE BY PIECE The “classic cast” was not yet assembled, but characters like Scotty and Sulu appeared in the second pilot.

SWAGGER William Shatner brought a different kind of energy and charm to the second pilot, which helped everything click into place.

While Spock would remain, the same could not be said about Captain Pike. Jeffrey Hunter was not contractually obligated to return for a second pilot, and despite being asked to come back, he decided to leave *Star Trek* behind, apparently to focus on movies. (In 1969, Hunter died at the age of 42 after a head injury he sustained in a fall.) A search began for a new lead actor, with Jack Lord (later to become a household name on *Hawaii Five-O*) reportedly one of the top choices. Ultimately, the job went to William Shatner, a familiar face to American viewers from a variety of shows. Another important decision was made with Shatner’s casting—he wouldn’t play Captain Pike, but instead an entirely different character: Captain James R. Kirk (the “R” would later become “T”).

Other new crew members included James Doohan as Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott, George Takei as Mr. Sulu, head of the Enterprise’s Astro-Sciences Department, and Paul Fix as Dr. Mark Piper. In addition, the bridge crew displayed more racial diversity than the first pilot with the inclusion of Communications Officer Alden, a black man, played by Lloyd Haynes.

“I realized immediately that this was a groundbreaking show,” says Takei. “Groundbreaking for me as an Asian-American actor, and groundbreaking for television, because of the vision and the creative genius that went into it by Gene Roddenberry.... When I was being interviewed [for the role of Sulu], Gene said the Starship Enterprise was a metaphor for Starship Earth, and the strength of this starship was in its diversity coming together and working in concert as a team. The opportunity to be a part of that was thrilling for me.”

Interestingly, the script for the second pilot, "Where No Man Has Gone Before," wasn't penned by Roddenberry. Instead it was written by Samuel A. Peeples, a veteran television writer and science fiction expert who had been advising Roddenberry during *Star Trek*'s development.

Filming for the second pilot began on July 19, 1965, under the direction of James Goldstone. The story involved the Enterprise journeying into the massive energy barrier located at the edge of our galaxy. The trip is cut short when the barrier proves to be too intense for the vessel—and causes Kirk's helmsman and close friend, Lieutenant Commander Gary Mitchell, to mutate into a godlike being who soon looks down upon humans. Mitchell was played by none other than Gary Lockwood, who said he took the guest-starring gig "as a favor to [Roddenberry]." He was joined by fellow guest star Sally Kellerman, who played Dr. Elizabeth Dehner, the ship's psychiatrist, similarly affected by the barrier.

"[SHATNER'S] ENERGY WAS VITAL FOR THE SHOW AND MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO FINALLY FIND [MY] NICHE."

DYNAMIC DUO
The addition of Shatner's Captain Kirk helped unlock the potential of the entire show and had an especially positive impact on Nimoy's Mr. Spock.

The episode explored a timeless theme, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," as well as the moral obligations of a god. Kirk realizes that with Mitchell's humanity rapidly fading, his friend now represents a grave threat to the galaxy and must be stopped—or killed. The climactic showdown between Kirk and Mitchell embodied the kind of personal drama and action that had been mostly missing from the first pilot. Aside from his middle initial, Shatner's Kirk is fully-formed right from the start—and a stark contrast to Hunter's Pike, exuding charisma and passion. He clearly has a strong bond with senior officers Mitchell, Spock and even Scott.

Leonard Nimoy, however, was still finding the way with his character. In the second pilot, Spock is again a bit high-strung and expressive, but the character as we would come to know him is also starting to emerge. Nimoy appreciated what Shatner brought to the show and how it helped him. As he wrote in *I Am Spock*, "[Shatner] played the role with great energy and élan, and wasn't afraid to take chances.... That energy was vital for the show, and made it possible for me to finally find a niche for my role. I don't think the Spock character would have worked as well with Jeff Hunter, because Jeff's Captain Pike was introverted and soft-spoken, so there was no contrast."

NBC also recognized the new dynamic, so much so that in February 1966, the network greenlit *Star Trek* as a weekly series.

CHAPTER 6

THE CAPTAIN

William Shatner was a successful actor
with a long list of credits on stage and screen,
but without a show or iconic role to
call his own before he became Captain Kirk

HERO

Shatner's Kirk was a combination of Horatio Hornblower, Alexander the Great and Bill Shatner.

W

William Shatner is forever connected with *Star Trek* and its faithful fans. But his journey to the Starship Enterprise was a long and circuitous one. Shatner was born in Montreal, Canada, on March 22, 1931—just four days before his future co-star Leonard Nimoy. Like Nimoy, Shatner was raised in a Jewish family and caught the acting bug at a young age. He was a child performer on radio programs for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and acted while attending McGill University. In another parallel to Nimoy, Shatner's decision to pursue an acting career greatly disappointed his father, a hardworking suit manufacturer who was expecting his son to follow in his footsteps.

After college, Shatner joined the Canadian National Repertory Theater in Ottawa and performed in several productions at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Ontario. While there, he understudied for Christopher Plummer in Henry V and was called upon to step into the lead role for a brief time when Plummer became ill.

By the late 1950s, Shatner had moved to the United States, gotten married, and had made his Broadway debut in *Tamburlaine the Great*. He was also appearing in notable teleplays (a popular staple on TV at the time) including *The Kaiser Aluminum Hour*, *Kraft Television Theatre*, *Goodyear Television Playhouse*, *Studio One*, *Playhouse 90*, and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, performing in works written by the likes of Rod Serling, Reginald Rose, and Stirling Silliphant. Shatner eventually returned to Broadway for successful runs in *The World of Suzie Wong* and *A Shot in the Dark*.

Shatner also successfully made the leap to the big screen, with roles in 1958's *The Brothers Karamazov* and 1961's *Judgment at Nuremberg* and *The Explosive Generation*. In 1962 he starred in *The Intruder*, a well-reviewed but controversial movie in which he played a manipulative, racist rabble-rouser determined to incite the white residents of a Southern town to resist court-ordered desegregation. *The New York Times* review described Shatner's portrayal of the character as "unctuous and deceitful in a provokingly superficial way."

While he loved performing live on stage, opportunities to work in television kept coming Shatner's way in the early 1960s. His TV credits during that period included many popular shows, like *The Twilight Zone*, *One Step Beyond*, *Thriller*, *The Defenders*, *Dr. Kildare*, *77 Sunset Strip*, *Route 66*, *The Outer Limits*, and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, where he and Nimoy appeared together onscreen for the first time.

VERSATILE
On Broadway with Julie Harris, Shatner was a prolific performer with a wide range of credits.

> "IT WAS AN INTERESTING GAMBLE… I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY SCIENCE FICTION."

By 1964, Shatner was the father of three little girls, and while he was working constantly as a guest star on established shows and getting good notices, he sought a more stable platform for his acting career—namely, a weekly TV series of his own. To that end, he played the title role in *Alexander the Great*, a sword-and-sandals pilot that co-starred another actor who would later break out in an iconic 1960s TV show: Batman himself, Adam West. It did not get picked up as a series, which seemed to suit Shatner just fine, as he later described the pilot as "*Combat!* in drag."

Shatner also starred in the pilot for a legal drama, *For the People*, which did become a series, premiering in January 1965. While the notices were good—one in *Hollywood Review* called Shatner "an unusually fine actor who makes his role a living thing"—the ratings weren't, and the show ended in May after just 13 episodes. But the timing could not have been better for Shatner or for Gene Roddenberry. Just days after the cancellation of *For the People*, Shatner received word that Roddenberry wanted to meet with him to discuss the lead in a new science-fiction pilot.

Jack Lord had been high on Roddenberry's list as a possible new captain of the Enterprise (the new character's name had not yet been decided, but in addition to Kirk, the list of possibilities included January, Flagg, Drake, Raintree, Hannibal, and North). Lord, however, reportedly wanted 50 percent ownership of the show and a co-producer credit—two conditions that Roddenberry and Desilu dismissed out of hand. They moved on to Shatner, with NBC's blessing.

Shatner was intrigued by the opportunity. "I thought it was an interesting gamble for myself as an actor to take, because I've always been fascinated by science fiction," he recalled in the 2016 Star Trek oral history, *The Fifty-Year Mission: The First 25 Years*. Roddenberry arranged a screening of "The Cage" for Shatner, who, upon watching it, saw great potential in the overall concept. "I was impressed," he wrote in his 1993 memoir, *Star Trek Memories*. "The green girl, and Leonard (who smiles... twice), and Majel Barrett as Number One, and I thought it was extremely imaginative and extremely inventive."

Following the screening, according to Shatner, he and Roddenberry "talked at great length about the possibilities, potential drawbacks, and proposed direction of the series." One of Shatner's main notes was that the characters in the "The Cage" came off

A STEADY JOB
Shatner—shown with wife Gloria and daughter Melanie Ann—wanted to lead a series.

as way too serious, and that the captain should be lightened up a bit. Roddenberry had come to the same conclusion. He advised Shatner to read C.S. Forester's *Horatio Hornblower* novels to get a good sense of how he envisioned the captain—

> "I WAS IMPRESSED.... I THOUGHT [THE ORIGINAL PILOT] WAS EXTREMELY IMAGINATIVE AND EXTREMELY INVENTIVE."

that influence, at least, remained unchanged from Roddenberry's original vision for the series.

Like most actors, especially the good ones, Shatner also brought his own interpretation of the Kirk character into his planned performance. As detailed in the 1994 book, *Star Trek: "Where No One Has Gone Before,"* Shatner partly based his approach on a character he had performed not long before: Alexander the Great. "Alexander was the epitome of the Greek hero," he said. "He was the athlete and the intellectual of his time... a great warrior and a great thinker... I saw something of Kirk in Alexander—the heroism... [the striking out] into unknown territories."

Shatner wrote in *Star Trek Memories* that at the end of his meeting with Roddenberry, the show creator told him, "You're my leading man." Shatner was ready to commit as well, feeling certain that he and Roddenberry shared the same objectives, starting with creating "serious drama as well as science fiction. [Roddenberry's] reputation and ability, which I knew firsthand, was such that I did not think he would do *Lost in Space*. And I was too expensive an actor, with what special or particular abilities I have, to warrant being put in something that somebody else could walk through. So I felt confident that *Star Trek* would keep those serious objectives for the most part, and it did."

Robert H. Justman, *Star Trek*'s associate producer and a key figure in the day-to-day operations on the two pilots and the series, recalled Roddenberry's relief that he had his new captain in place. "Gene was very happy that he was able to get Bill Shatner, who was highly thought of in the industry," Justman explained in *The Fifty-Year Mission*. "He was a more accomplished actor than Jeff Hunter was, and he... gave the captain a terrific personality. He embodied what Gene had in mind, which was the flawed hero."

Shatner also had flaws, which would surface over time behind the scenes.

THE BIG THREE
The dynamic that emerged between Kirk, Bones and Spock is, to many, the key ingredient to Star Trek's success.

NOT SO SERIOUS
From the start, Shatner brought a playful energy to his Captain Kirk and the show.

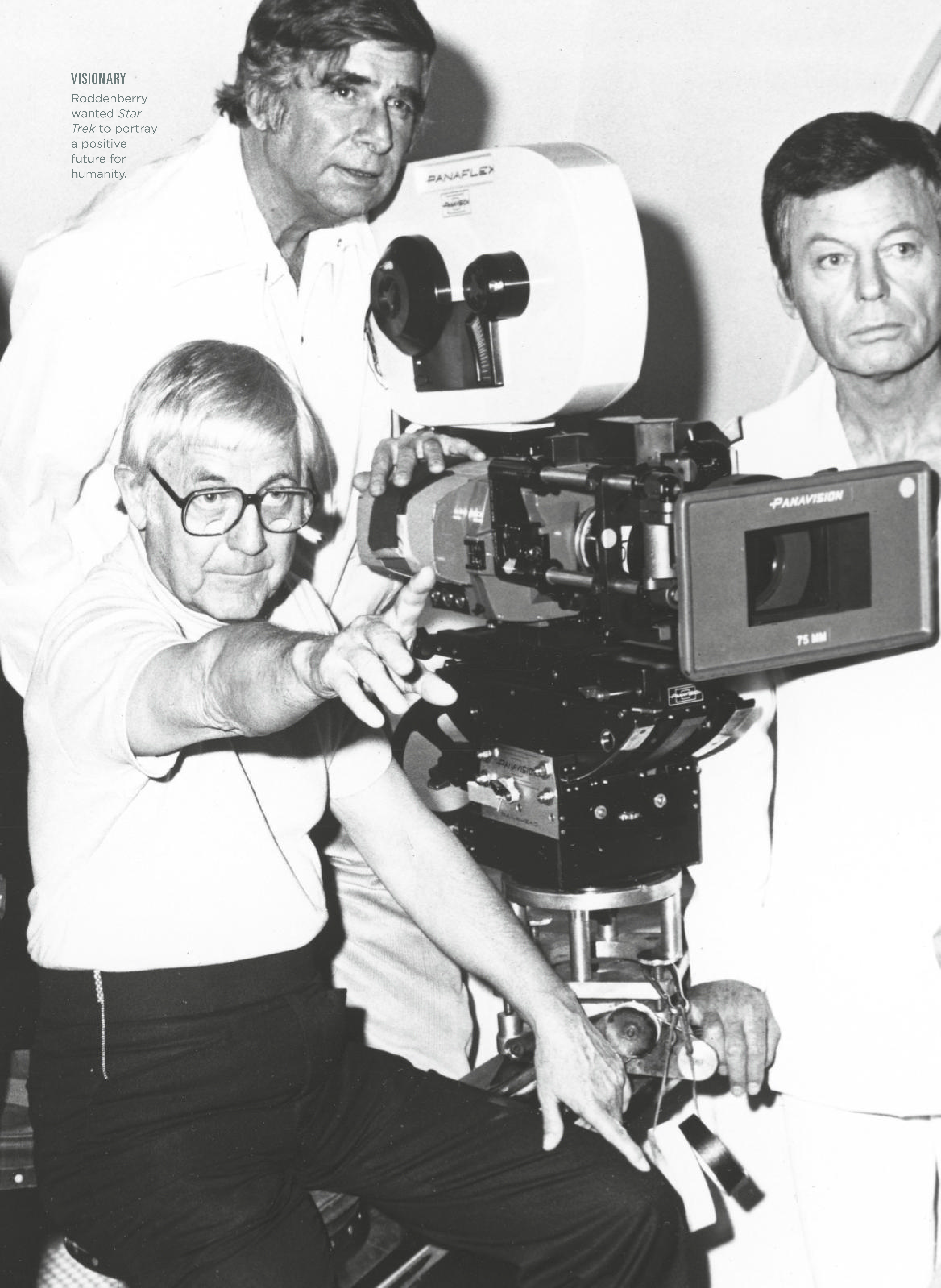
CHAPTER 7

STARFLEET'S FINEST

Star Trek's diversity in casting was groundbreaking. It was also Gene Roddenberry's attempt to signal to a divided America that, one day, such problems would be solved

ALL TOGETHER

Chekov, Uhura, Scotty and Sulu working in harmony on the Enterprise.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VISIONARY
Roddenberry wanted *Star Trek* to portray a positive future for humanity.

While *Star Trek* was being developed, Gene Roddenberry never intended to make it “The Kirk & Spock Show.” Instead, he wanted to present a full and diverse crew, working together with mutual respect to overcome the challenges they faced. As far as Roddenberry was concerned, Starfleet officers represented the very best that the galaxy had to offer, and the officers who were human would demonstrate just how much Earth’s dominant species would have progressed by the 23rd century.

“If man survives that long, he will have learned to take delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures,” Roddenberry wrote in *The Making of Star Trek*. “He will learn that differences in ideas and attitudes are a delight, part of life’s exciting variety, not something to fear. It’s a manifestation of the greatness that God, or whatever it is, gave us. This infinite variation and delight, this is part of the optimism we built into *Star Trek*.”

From the start, Roddenberry had wanted casting to be inclusive, despite the fact that embracing diversity and equality was hardly the norm in early-to-mid-1960s America. This approach actually brought Roddenberry into rare alignment with NBC, which was making a concerted effort to cast diverse actors, particularly black people, on its shows. As *Star Trek* became a weekly series, Roddenberry strived to emphasize the multi-racial, multi-cultural, and mixed-gender makeup of the Enterprise crew. George Takei was kept on from the second pilot as Mr. Sulu and moved to the position of helmsman, a key member of the bridge crew. While Communications Officer Alden was dropped, he was replaced by another black character—and a woman, to boot: Lieutenant Uhura, played by Nichelle Nichols. Since she was also stationed on the bridge, Uhura would be highly visible, even if she didn’t play a major role in many episodes.

Another prominent woman on the Enterprise was Yeoman Janice Rand, played by Grace Lee

“[ACCEPTING HUMAN DIVERSITY] IS PART OF THE OPTIMISM WE BUILT INTO *STAR TREK*”

Whitney. She appeared in early first-season episodes as a potential love interest for Captain Kirk, though Roddenberry always intended for their relationship to remain strictly platonic. Whitney was abruptly dropped from the cast, however, supposedly due to budget limitations and a creative decision to keep Kirk free of a relationship and available to other women.

There was also Nurse Christine Chapel, portrayed by none other than Majel Barrett—Number One may have been cut from the show, but Roddenberry made sure that Barrett would still be a part of it. Harboring a not-so-secret, hopeless love for Mr. Spock, Chapel functioned, to some extent, as a surrogate for the many female *Star Trek* viewers who had fallen hard for the cool, logical, emotionally reserved Vulcan and, like Chapel, could never have him.

The show didn't always hit the right notes when it came to promoting a future with advanced gender equity. In "Turnabout Intruder," the final episode, it was implied that no women in Starfleet held the rank of captain or commanded any of its starships. The most lofty female crew member, at least of the recurring cast, was Uhura, who was never shown to be anything but a consummate professional. On the several occasions where she expressed fear during a mission, Uhura nevertheless carried out her duties and responsibilities with aplomb.

In the second season, the show introduced Ensign Pavel Chekov, a young Russian played by Walter Koenig, in an effort to maximize the show's youth appeal. As Roddenberry wrote in a memo dated September 22, 1966, "Keeping our teenage audience in mind, also keeping aware of current trends, let's watch for a young, irreverent, English-accent 'Beatle' type to try on the show, possibly with an eye to him reoccurring. Like the smallish fellow who looks to be a hit on *The Monkees*."

The Chekov character went from being British to Russian because Roddenberry was under the impression that *Pravda*, then the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had criticized the show for not including a Russian crew member on the Enterprise. It was unlikely that such a piece ever ran, since *Star Trek* wasn't even airing in the Soviet Union at the time. But believing the critique prompted Roddenberry to act, given Russia's success with its space program. As he commented in *The Making of Star Trek*, "The Chekov thing was a major error on our part, and I'm still embarrassed by the fact that we didn't include a Russian right from the beginning."

Just as important as diversity was the chemistry

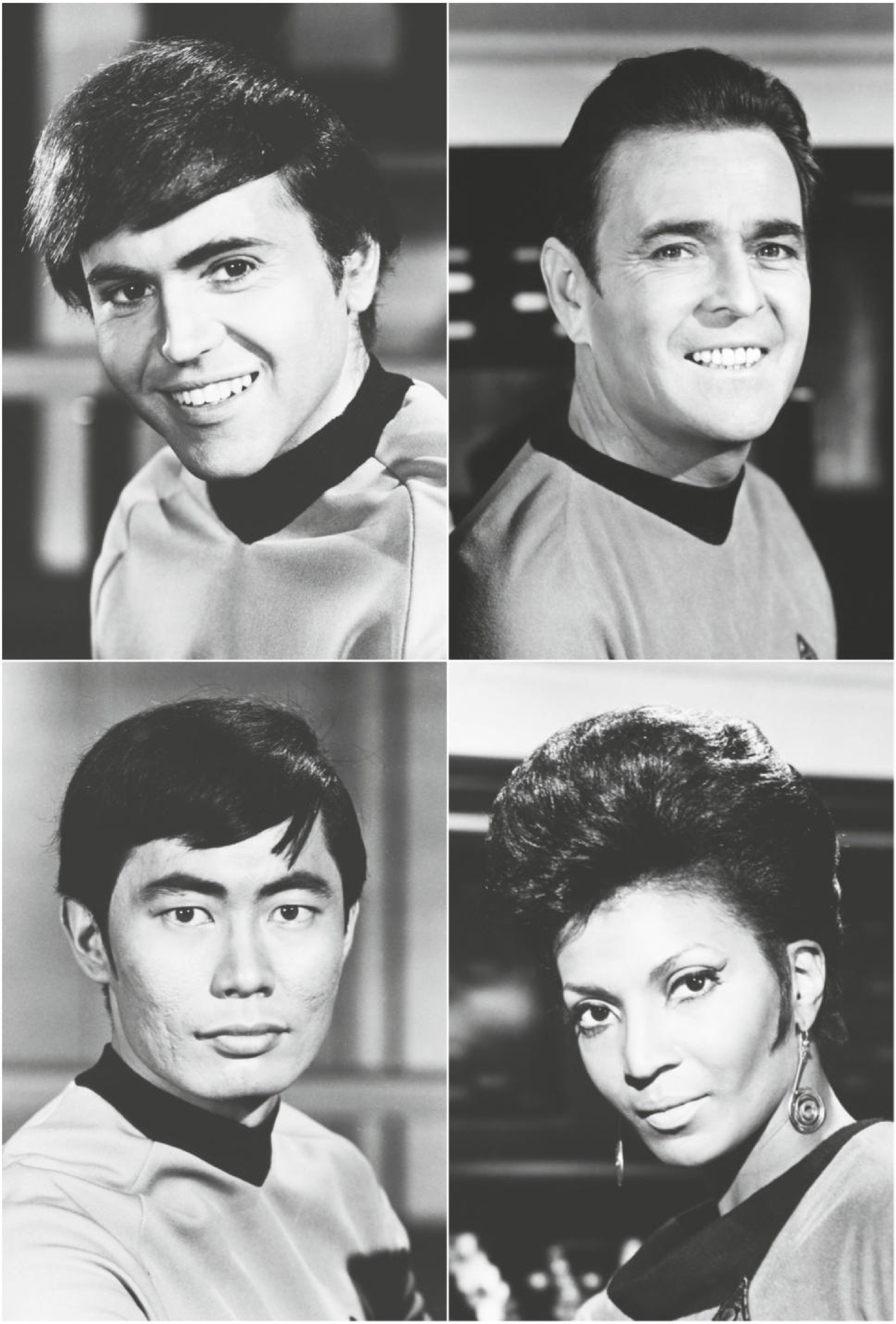
VISION OF THE FUTURE

Roddenberry wanted to represent a future where equity and equality had been achieved. Yet roles like Nurse Chapel were still very traditional and not especially progressive.

"IT ALL CAME TOGETHER AND EACH OF US IN THE BEGINNING... HAD THIS FEELING OF UNITY."

between the members of the crew. With James Doohan's Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott retained from the second pilot, and the addition of DeForest Kelley as Dr. Leonard "Bones" McCoy, the *Star Trek* cast meshed remarkably well, their performances often conveying a camaraderie and history with each other that was only implied in the scripts. A good example of this subtle, yet powerful, ingredient of success was Kirk and Scott's shared love for the Enterprise. In essence, the pair were like the ship's "parents"—Scott its nurturer, protector, and nursemaid, and Kirk the hard-charging taskmaster who pushes it to perform to its fullest potential.

DeForest Kelley clicked so well with everyone—especially William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy—that his role expanded throughout the first season, to the point where his name



THE CREW
Walter Koenig (Chekov), James Doohan (Scotty), Nichelle Nichols (Uhura) and George Takei (Sulu) were all fan favorites.

THE TRINITY
Off camera, Nimoy and Shatner emerged as stars. Kelley was the glue between them and the rest of the cast.

was added to the opening credits in Season Two. An unintended "trinity" formed, with Spock as the intellect, McCoy as the heart, and Kirk as a synthesis of the two, taking their counsel and using it to make tough decisions. This would become a key element of the show's appeal.

"[McCoy] really began to take shape after about six or seven of the episodes," Kelley recalled in *The Fifty-Year Mission*. "In addition to the sardonic-type wit, I tried to inject as much warmth as I could give to him at the proper times, and also a sense of great caring. Bill and Leonard being the fine actors they are, there seemed to be a certain chemistry that fell into place among us. It all came together, and each of us had in the beginning of *Trek* this feeling of unity, of trying to make it as fine a show as possible."

That spirit of unity didn't necessarily exist behind the scenes. As Mr. Spock eclipsed Captain Kirk in terms of popularity—and fan mail—Shatner became very protective of his position as the star of the show. According to several insiders, he literally counted lines in each script to ensure that Nimoy didn't have more dialogue than him. At the same time, Nimoy recognized how essential Spock had become, and demanded an increase in both prominence and pay, which made Shatner feel even more insecure.

There was also growing resentment from Doohan, Takei, Nichols, and Koenig towards Shatner, whom they felt was treating them like little more than extras. They also felt he was using his clout on the set to diminish their roles and contributions, going so far as to push for their lines of dialogue to be cut—or given to him. Over the years, Shatner has either denied these claims or said that he didn't realize that his behavior and actions had caused any hurt or offense.

One thing is certain: *Star Trek* may have been about advanced, enlightened people of the 23rd century, but it starred people who were very much of the 20th.

STAR TREK

CHAPTER 8

THESE ARE THE VOYAGES...

Gene Roddenberry's show succeeded in making it to series, but would last for only three seasons before running into problems and, eventually, cancellation by NBC

A FIVE-YEAR MISSION…

…was cut short during the show's original network run.

Gene Roddenberry was *Star Trek*'s hands-on line producer for the first half of the show's first season. But he became overwhelmed as he struggled to get episodes completed on time and on budget while also rewriting each script to meet his exacting standards. "I had found myself working twelve or fourteen hours a day, and I could no longer do it," he explained in *The Fifty-Year Mission*.

Overwork also took a toll on Associate Producer Robert H. Justman, who had helped Roddenberry oversee every aspect of *Star Trek* since the pilot. "We both nearly didn't make it through the first season," confirmed Justman in the same book. "We were at our wits' end."

In need of help, Roddenberry hired a new producer, Gene L. Coon, primarily to oversee script development. Coon was a top-notch writer himself. He not only understood the vision of *Star Trek*, he also saw ways to expand upon it. Among his many contributions, Coon created the Klingons, as well as the Prime Directive that forbade Starfleet officers from interfering in the natural development of the worlds they visited. He also co-wrote "Space Seed," the episode that introduced Ricardo Montalban's iconic nemesis Khan Noonien Singh.

Under Coon, *Star Trek* developed its more subtle and charming nuances as well, particularly the friendship between the senior Enterprise crewmembers, the verbal sparring between Spock and McCoy, and humor, which dominated episodes like "The Trouble With Tribbles," "A Piece of the Action," and "I, Mudd." (This eventually put Coon at odds with Roddenberry, who preferred more formality and fewer laughs.)

For these reasons, Coon is considered by many *Star Trek* fans to be almost as important as Roddenberry to the show's success. David Gerrold, who wrote "The Trouble With Tribbles," observed in *The Fifty-Year Mission*, "Roddenberry always took the show too seriously and everybody preached. ... Gene L. Coon's characters joked with each other. I think that's why the fans loved the show so much.... [The characters] were never too busy to snipe at each other, which was the way they showed their

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE
Fans loved the show's action, excellent writing, and memorable characters. Yet it was not a ratings success.

"I HAD FOUND MYSELF WORKING TWELVE OR FOURTEEN HOURS A DAY, AND I COULD NO LONGER DO IT."

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KHAAAAN!
Ricardo Montalban introduced the character of Khan on the original series (below) before returning to the legendary role years later in the movies.

> “QUITE SIMPLY, GENE RODDENBERRY CREATED *STAR TREK*, AND [PRODUCER GENE L.] COON MADE IT FLY.”

affection.”

As William As Shatner bluntly summarized in *Star Trek Memories*, “Quite simply, Roddenberry created Star Trek, and Coon made it fly.”

Dorothy (D.C.) Fontana, who had once been Roddenberry’s secretary, also emerged as one of the show’s most important writers, and served as its story editor for a time. She is credited for much of Spock’s character development, through episodes like “This Side of Paradise,” in which he falls in love, and “Journey to Babel,” which introduces his parents, Vulcan Ambassador Sarek and his human wife, Amanda.

Leonard Nimoy also made significant contributions to the show’s development. The most memorable are the Vulcan neck pinch, introduced in “The Enemy Within” to avoid having Spock resort to violence to subdue an opponent, and the Vulcan hand salute, first seen in “Amok Time,” for which Nimoy tapped into his Jewish heritage and a religious ceremony he had witnessed as a child in synagogue.

Roddenberry commissioned scripts from top writers in television and literary science fiction. Among them: Richard Matheson, Robert Bloch, Norman Spinrad, Jerome Bixby, Theodore Sturgeon, and Harlan Ellison. It was Ellison, albeit heavily rewritten by Fontana, Coon, and Roddenberry, who provided what is generally revered as *Star Trek*’s finest hour: “The City on the Edge of Forever,” a time-travel story in which Kirk’s love for an Earth woman in the past, played by Joan Collins, jeopardizes human history.

As Roddenberry always intended, *Star Trek* took on relevant topics like war, bigotry, the darkness within us all, and the relevance of God. It also tackled pure science fiction concepts, including a giant space amoeba, a parallel universe, and the rise of artificial intelligence. The show even managed to bring back Captain Pike, using footage from the original pilot as flashbacks in an acclaimed two-parter called “The Menagerie,” which told a new story about Pike’s ultimate fate. With clever, inventive, and fun writing, combined with effective performances by the cast, *Star Trek* attracted a devoted following—including a sizable number of children.

LOVING SPOCK

Many of the details that added greatly to Spock’s character, including the Vulcan neck pinch and hand salute, were suggested by Leonard Nimoy himself.

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But fan devotion did not mean smooth sailing for the Enterprise. At Desilu, the executives who had warned Lucille Ball that the show would be so expensive to produce that it might lead to financial trouble for the studio were proven correct. In February 1967, as *Star Trek* was airing its first season, Ball announced that she had sold Desilu to Gulf+Western, the new parent company of Paramount Pictures. The deal was finalized in July, and Desilu was later transformed into Paramount Television. Herb Solow left the studio less than a year later. Not only did *Star Trek* now belong to a company that didn't really understand the show, the program also lost the most powerful executive it had in its corner.

There were other problems. Despite its loyal audience, *Star Trek* was never a great ratings success, and as Roddenberry's relationship with NBC grew increasingly contentious—mostly over Roddenberry constantly fighting for his beliefs—executives at the network started to think that maybe *Star Trek* wasn't worth all the aggravation. Rumors swirled during the second season that the show would be canceled. In response, husband-and-wife fans John and Bjo Trimble launched a nationwide letter-writing campaign—secretly organized and funded by Roddenberry himself—that flooded NBC with nearly 116,000 pieces of mail to convince the network to keep the show on the air. *Star Trek* was renewed, but the celebration was short-lived. For the third season, NBC moved it to Friday nights at 10 p.m.—basically the "Death Slot," since the

FAN FAVORITES *Star Trek* developed legions of loyal viewers during its initial network run because the show was so thoughtful and unique.

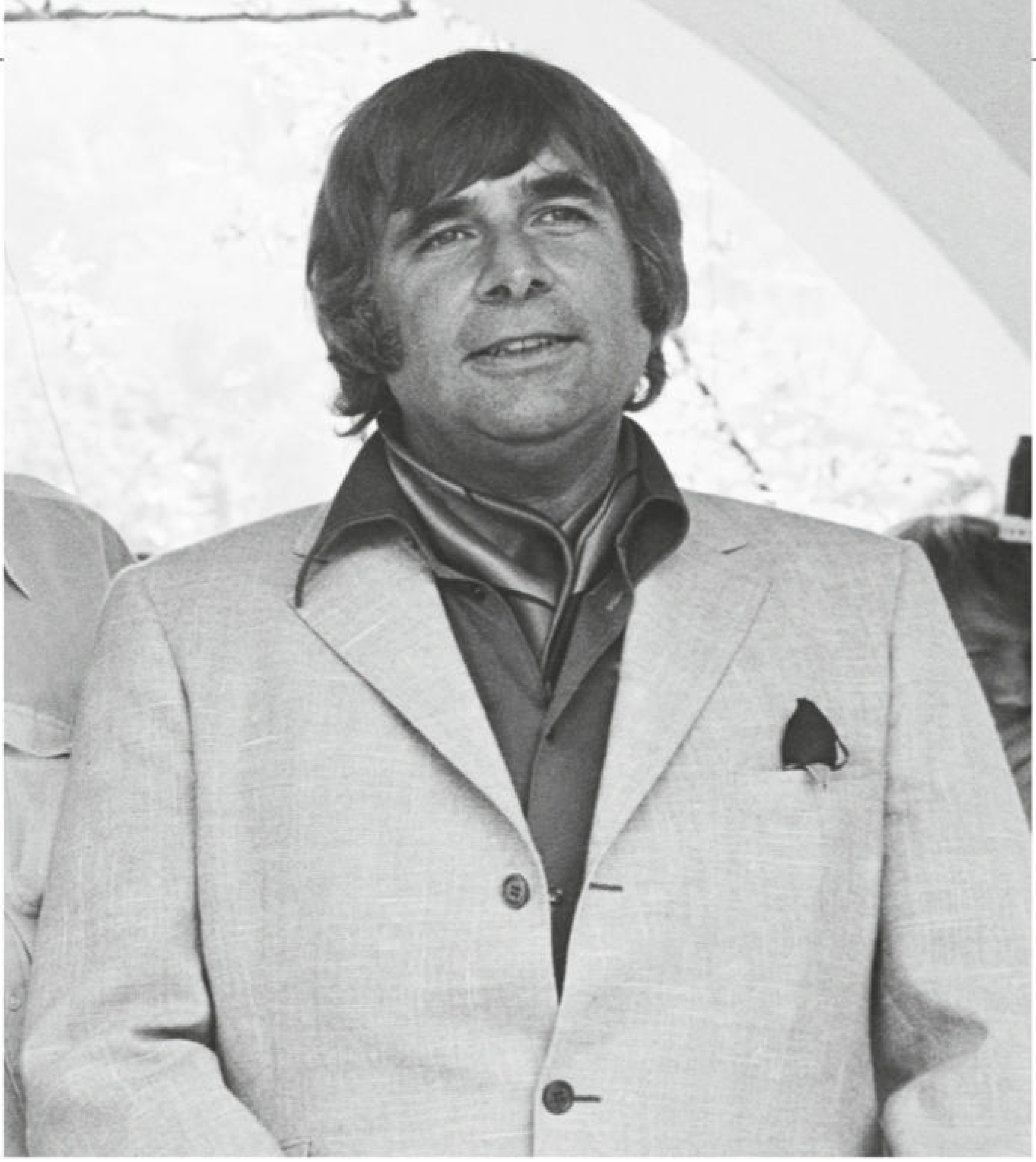
MOVING ON But by the show's third season, Gene Roddenberry had taken a step back and soon started planning for different projects.

show's core audience was either old enough to go out on Friday nights or so young that it was past their bedtime.

In protest of the new time slot, Roddenberry, while retaining his title of executive producer, mostly stepped away from *Star Trek*. An exhausted Coon had already left in the middle of the second season. Roddenberry installed a new line producer, Fred Freiberger, but according to several insiders, Freiberger made no real effort to gain any deep understanding of the show that, in essence, he would have to save. Without active input from Roddenberry, the overall quality of the writing declined.

To be fair, Freiberger was focused on doing whatever he could to improve the ratings and make the show accessible to a wider audience, on a budget substantially reduced from previous seasons. At the start of the series, the show was budgeted at $193,000 per episode, which dropped to $185,000 the next year. In the third season, Paramount cut the budget down to $178,500. To save money on set-building, many episodes took place mostly on the Enterprise. In *Inside Star Trek*, Robert Justman likened the cheaper season-three episodes to radio shows, in that all the actors could do was "stand around and talk to each other."

About halfway through the third season, a dispirited Justman threw in the towel and left—an omen that the show was on its last legs.



MOST SYNDICATED SHOWS EVENTUALLY DISAPPEAR... BUT *STAR TREK*'S CANCELLATION WAS JUST THE END OF THE BEGINNING.

Sure enough, with the ratings still falling, NBC canceled *Star Trek* in February 1969 and aired its 79th and final episode, "Turnabout Intruder," on June 3.

Star Trek, the rich manifestation of Gene Roddenberry's imagination and optimistic hopes for humanity, was finished. As the cast and crew dispersed, what remained of what they had created seemed fated to a life of syndicated reruns. Airing at random times on stations around the country—ironically, a cost-efficient way to fill air time—most syndicated shows eventually disappear when viewers grow tired of the rerun loop. But, as it turned out, *Star Trek*'s cancellation was really just the end of the beginning.

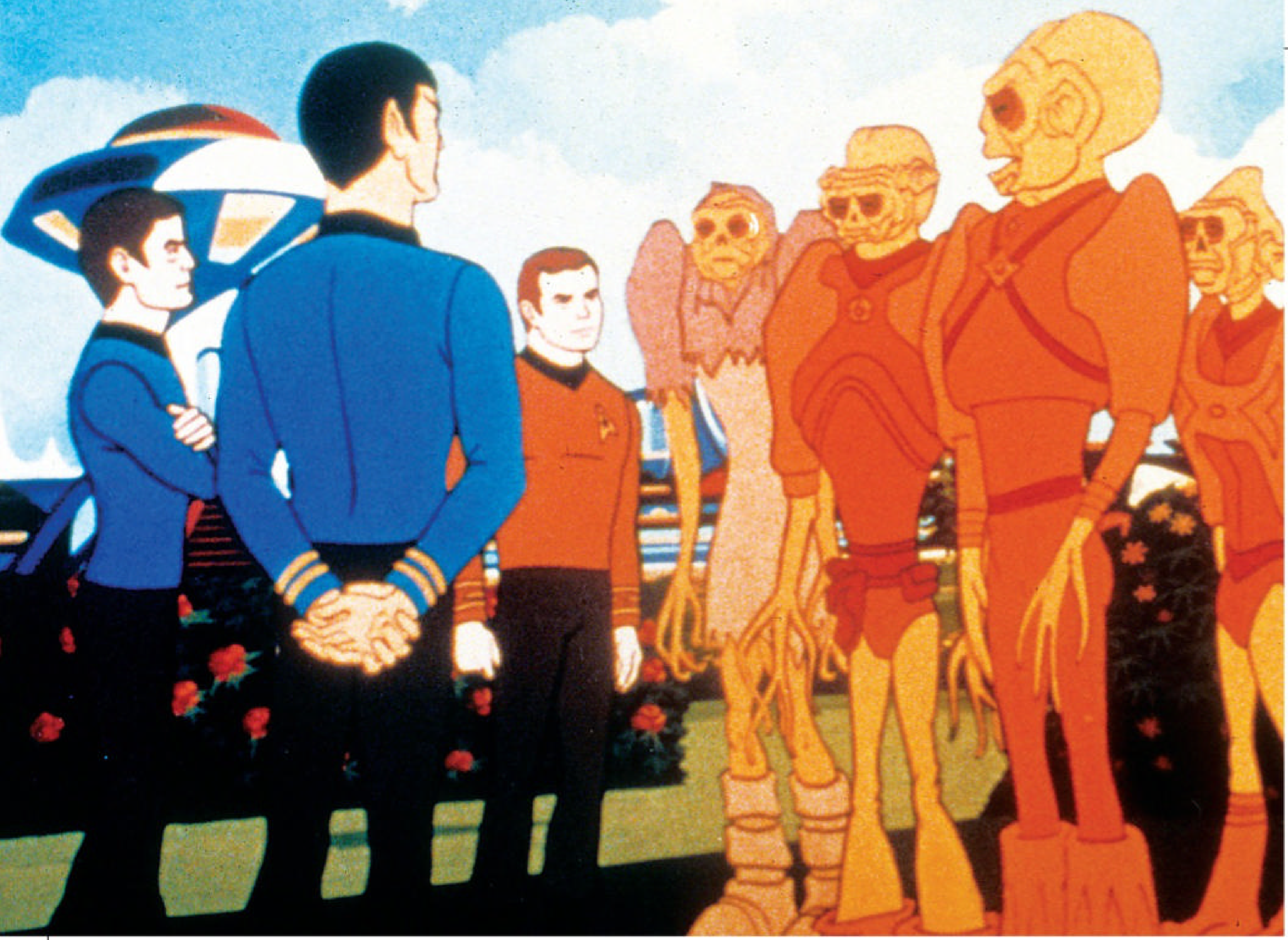
CHAPTER 9

STAR TREK LIVES!

Not long after the show's cancellation, a growing legion of fans let it be known that they wanted more—and that they would tune in and turn out if there was something new to see

THE RETURN

Star Trek: The Motion Picture was a wish come true for many in 1979.



On July 20, 1969, just weeks after NBC aired the final episode of *Star Trek*, the promise of exploring strange planets and boldly going where no man had gone before became a stunning reality: Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon.

In the long afterglow of this milestone achievement, space travel fascinated and captivated America's imagination more than ever. Meanwhile, in syndication, reruns of *Star Trek* not only attracted the show's original viewers to watch again (and again, and again), it also spawned new fans who either missed the phenomenon the first time or were too young to appreciate it.

By the early 1970s, *Star Trek* had an army of devoted, passionate, and highly-vocal fans. They organized. They held conventions where members of the cast and crew gave talks, answered questions, and signed autographs. The first such event, held in New York City in 1972, was expected to attract about 500 people. Organizers stopped counting after more than 3,000 showed up. Attendance increased by the thousands as similar gatherings were held over the next few years. As the fanbase expanded, their message grew louder: We want more *Star Trek*!

On September 8, 1973, seven years to the day after *Star Trek* premiered, the show returned to NBC with new episodes. Overseen by Gene Roddenberry, with D.C. Fontana as story editor and many of the original writers contributing scripts, it featured the entire cast except for Walter Koenig,

ANIMATED
Fan demand brought *Star Trek* back into existance, with a Saturday morning cartoon series being the first revival.

LINING UP
Passionate fans made the first *Star Trek* movie a financial success, despite a film that didn't live up to high expectations.

REGENCY I
WILLIAM SHATNER
LEONARD
NIMOY
STAR TREK
STAR TREK
STAR TREK
TOW-AW
NO STOP
4 P.M. TO 6
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STO
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MON. WED
STREET CLE
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GOLDEN GATE MOTORS
USED CARS
ND PRIX
PORTS
MERCEDES BENZ-BMW-PORSCHE
ONE WAY
mopar
PARTS
VAN NESS

who was excluded due to budgetary restrictions (though Koenig got to write an episode). But there was one major difference between this show and the original: This version of *Star Trek* was a half-hour cartoon aired on Saturday mornings.

S*tar Trek: The Animated Series* ran two seasons and a total of 22 episodes. While accessible to children, it never spoke down to them and maintained the same approach and focus on quality writing that was a hallmark of the original series. It even earned *Star Trek* its first Emmy Award (Outstanding Entertainment - Children's Series, 1975).

Now there was even more hunger among the fanbase to see the crew of the Enterprise in live action once again. Roddenberry and Paramount recognized this, and in 1975, the two parties struck a deal to develop a movie. Roddenberry wrote a script, *The God Thing*, in which a powerful entity, apparently God, approaches Earth to nudge humanity towards the next step in its development. But it turns out that the entity is a highly advanced machine—and one that is malfunctioning. "I was going to say that this false thing claiming to be God had screwed up Man's concept of the real infinity and beauty of what God is," Roddenberry explained in *The Fifty-Year Mission*. Paramount rejected the script, uncomfortable with a storyline that questioned the existence and the influence of the Almighty. Scrambling, the studio brought in other writers to pitch ideas. That set off an ongoing struggle between Roddenberry, who remained as producer, and studio executives for creative control.

At one point, the movie was canceled, to be replaced by a new television series under Roddenberry's guidance. *Star Trek: Phase II* was intended to premiere in 1978 as the flagship of a new Paramount-owned network. The plan was to reunite the full original cast, minus one: in a 1978 *Starlog* interview, Roddenberry said that Leonard Nimoy had made it abundantly clear that he was focusing on other things, including Broadway. But according to Nimoy in *I Am Spock*, he was invited back only as a recurring guest star. "The offer confused and startled me," he wrote. While Nimoy was not anxious to return to the grind of a weekly TV series—or to work with Roddenberry again, as the two men had fallen out several years earlier—he was also not interested in working his schedule around playing Spock only part-time. A new Vulcan, Lieutenant Xon, was created to replace *Star Trek*'s most popular character on the new show.

"THE OFFER CONFUSED AND STARTLED ME."

UNITED FRONT
The cast was all smiles at the film premiere, but behind the scenes the 1970s were a tough time.

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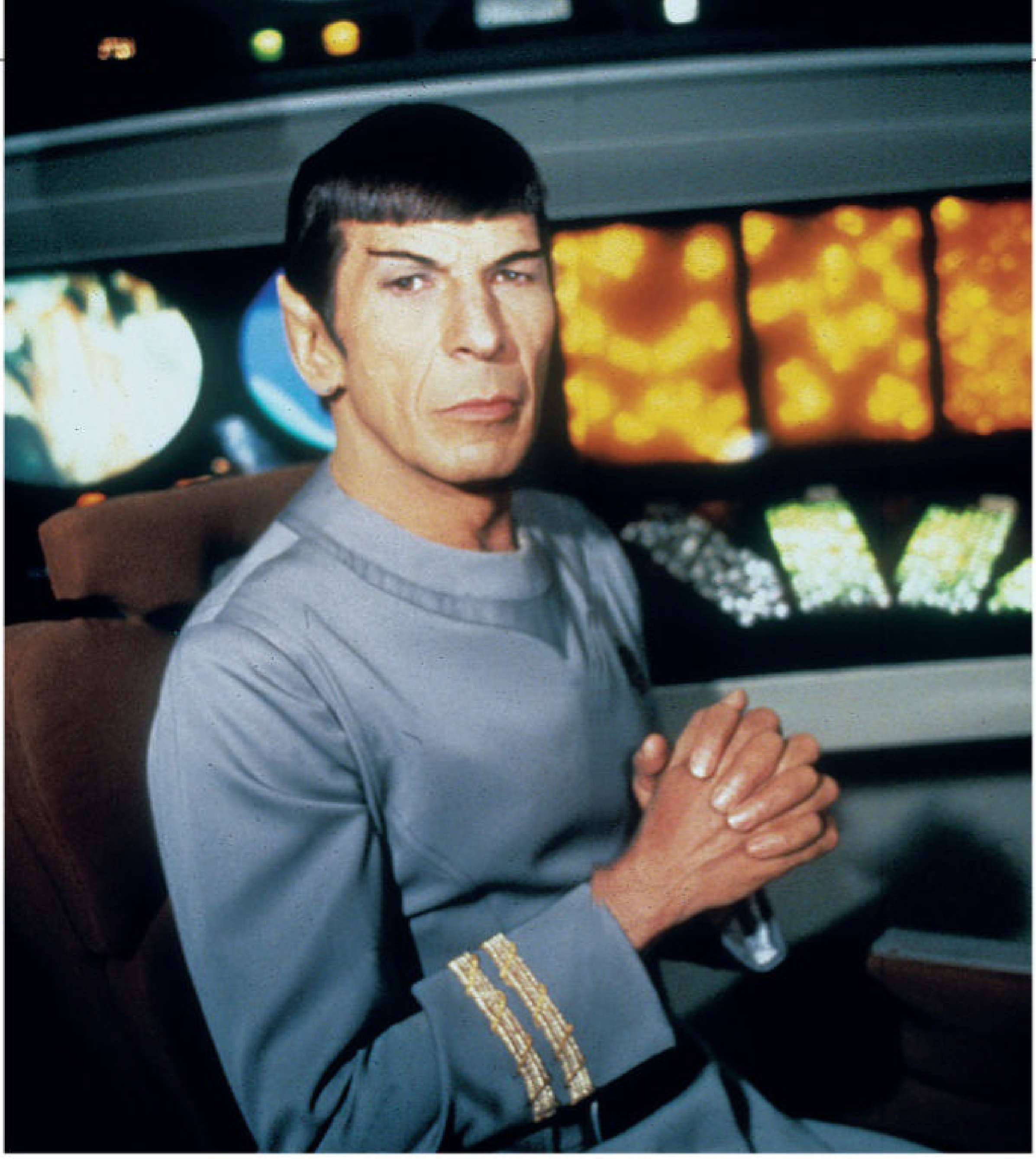
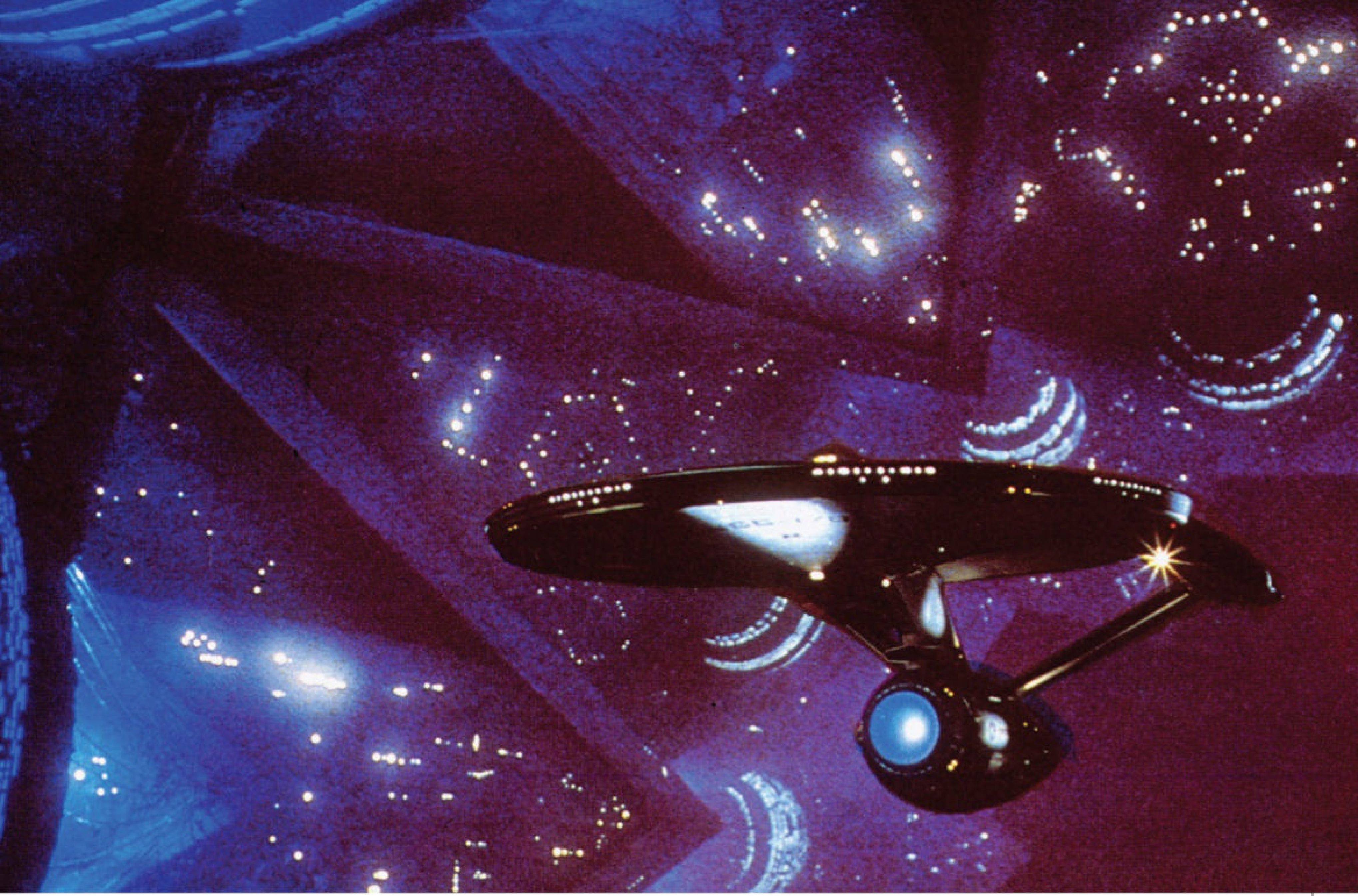


> THE MAN WHO CREATED *STAR TREK* NOW HAD AN OFFICIAL REPUTATION: DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH IN TELEVISION AND THE MOVIES.

If *Phase II* had actually launched, the Spock situation would have been polarizing and challenging to pull off. But the show never left the ground, shut down once Paramount was unable to get its network started. *Star Trek* wasn't dead, however—not after the studio saw how films like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* were performing at the box office. Now the planning for *Star Trek*'s return focused once again on a movie, and Paramount brought in a big gun to direct it: Robert Wise, no stranger to science fiction, having directed *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *The Andromeda Strain*.

The Nimoy relationship, however, was still an obstacle. At the time, he was suing Paramount over the use of his likeness in *Star Trek*-related merchandise and advertisements for which he received no payment. Nimoy would not even consider discussing the movie until the matter was resolved. While Robert Wise was not a *Star Trek* fan, his wife was—and she warned him that the movie would not work without Spock. Wise told the studio it was essential to get Nimoy back into the fold. Soon after, the lawsuit was settled, and despite major reservations about the script, Nimoy signed on. "I had no desire to face the public reaction if it were announced that I was the lone holdout from the original cast," he later wrote.

But even with Spock on board, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* was a troubled production. Roddenberry clashed constantly with the main screenwriter, Harold Livingston—and was appalled when studio head Michael Eisner took Livingston's side. The story, about a massive vessel called V'Ger that threatens



ILLOGICAL

Leonard Nimoy returned to play Spock in *The Motion Picture*, but his involvement with the franchise was contentious and not always certain.

SPECIAL ENOUGH?

Star Trek's effects were effective on TV, but by the time the movie was made the bar had been raised significantly.

Earth as it searches for its mysterious creator, essentially cobbled together elements from *The God Thing* and several episodes of the TV series, particularly "The Changeling" and "The Doomsday Machine"—and even an animated episode, "One of Our Planets is Missing." Focused on creating a grand film of epic scale with state-of-the-art special effects, what seemed to be sacrificed was the warmth, humor, and camaraderie that had made the original show so endearing.

The movie fell behind schedule and went over budget, in part because the original special-effects team had to be replaced when it became clear they weren't up to the task. The third act was rethought and rewritten constantly as shooting continued, with Wise, Roddenberry, Livingston, Nimoy, and William Shatner huddling to address the dramatic weaknesses of the climax. Plus, the movie was locked into a release date that could not be pushed back, so Wise was unable to do any test screenings and fine-tune the movie the way he wanted.

Released on December 7, 1979, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* was a financial success, propelled by fans that went back to see it again and again despite whatever disappointment they may have felt about the film itself. It grossed more than $139 million worldwide on a $35 million budget that had ballooned to $44 million.

Still upset about the troubled production, Paramount's top brass were disappointed that *The Motion Picture* didn't quite hit *Star Wars* numbers. But they agreed that it did well enough to warrant a second movie. First, somebody needed to be blamed for all the drama. Most of that burden, unfairly or not, fell on Roddenberry. The man who created the show had a reputation: difficult to work with in television *and* the movies. The stage was set for *Star Trek* to live again as a movie franchise, but Gene Roddenberry was considered more of an obstacle than an asset.

CHAPTER 10

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

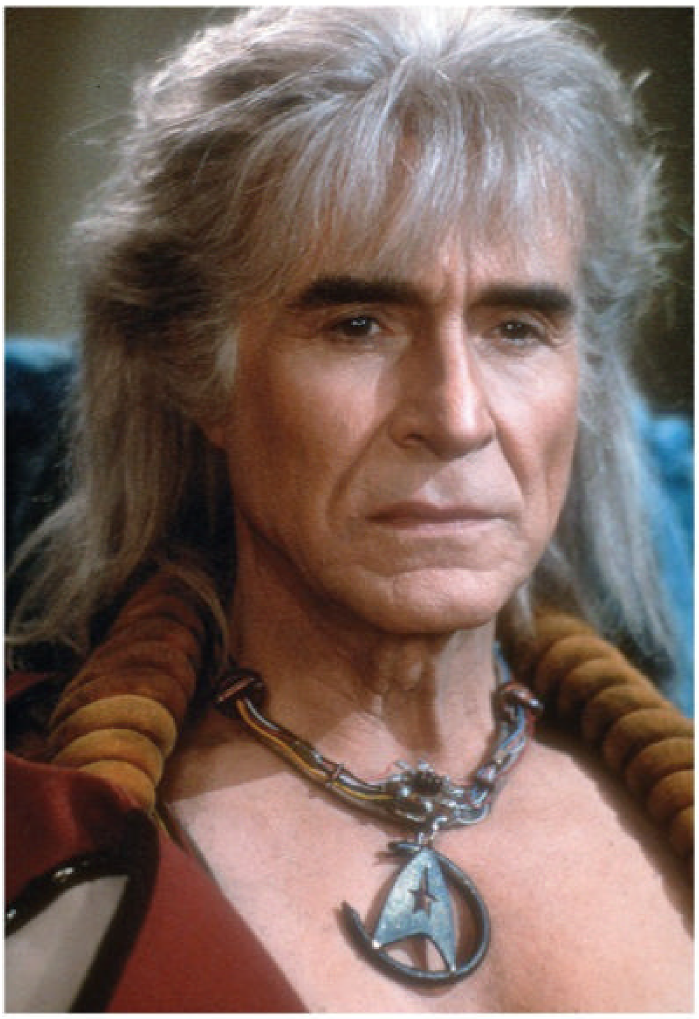
Fans wanted more time with their favorite crew in Starfleet. That wish was granted by a movie franchise that lasted more than 10 years.

TIME AFTER TIME
A three-year TV run led to more than a decade of movies

After the financial success of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture,* Paramount wanted to produce a sequel. Gene Roddenberry wanted to produce a sequel too. But Paramount didn't want to produce a sequel with Gene Roddenberry. In early 1980, Roddenberry submitted a 60-page treatment involving time travel, the Klingons, and the JFK assassination, but Paramount rejected it. Then the studio went one step further. It gave Roddenberry the title of "Executive Consultant," which essentially sidelined him, and brought in a new producer, Harve Bennett, who had previously overseen the popular television shows *The Mod Squad, The Six Million Dollar Man,* and *The Bionic Woman,* along with the acclaimed 1976 TV miniseries *Rich Man, Poor Man*. Bennett's primary mission echoed a theme that plagued *Star Trek* productions from the very beginning: Saving money. Paramount wanted a sequel at a fraction of the cost of the first movie.

Bennett hired Nicholas Meyer, the writer/director of 1979's time-travel adventure *Time After Time*, to direct the new film. Meyer also did an uncredited rewrite of the script, which had been developed by Bennett and Jack B. Sowards and featured the return of Ricardo Montalban's Khan Noonien Singh as the villain. As executive consultant, Roddenberry could provide notes and suggestions on all story outlines, script drafts, dailies, and cuts of the film—but the filmmakers were under no obligation to act on Roddenberry's feedback.

Despite Bennett and Meyer familiarizing themselves with *Star Trek* by watching episodes of the TV series, Roddenberry was displeased with their approach. He issued numerous lengthy memos throughout production, informing the filmmakers that what they were doing was "not good *Star Trek*." They tried to appease him, but in many instances, they chose to go their own way. Roddenberry responded by leaking a major, top-secret plot point that he vehemently opposed—the death of Spock—to provoke an organized fan outcry. It was actually Spock's death that secured Leonard Nimoy's participation. He had not enjoyed making the first film and didn't want to do another. Bennett knew that Spock must be in the movie to give it a chance to succeed.



A WINNING FORMULA

The sequel felt "bigger" than the first film but was cheaper to produce. Ricardo Montalban's performance did much to increase the resonance.

RODDENBERRY COULD PROVIDE NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS... BUT THE FILMMAKERS HAD NO OBLIGATION TO ACT ON HIS FEEDBACK.

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In the end, Bennett figured out a way to convince Nimoy to don the pointy ears again—even if it was for the final time. “I said, ‘Leonard, if you come back, I’m going to give you the greatest death scene since Janet Leigh in *Psycho*,” Bennett explained in a 2010 interview.

Produced on a budget of $12 million, 1982’s *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* earned more than $95 million at the box office and rave reviews, which elevated the status of Bennett and Meyer and seemed to justify the studio’s decision to strip Roddenberry of his control. (Today it stands as the most beloved *Star Trek* movie of all and, to many, a sci-fi classic.)

The film also marked a turning point in Nimoy’s feelings about the franchise which elevated his already significant influence. Despite getting the promised great death scene and a perfect exit from *Star Trek*, he ended up having such a good time making *The Wrath of Khan* that he was willing to bring Spock back to life in the next movie—and was able to convince Paramount to let him direct it.

But during the making of 1984’s *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, Roddenberry struck again. This time he leaked the fact that the Enterprise would be destroyed in the movie, prompting a new round of fan outrage. The film did well anyway, earning $87 million against an $18 million budget. Nimoy was immediately offered the director’s chair for the next installment, and was granted a budget of $24 million and creative control that eclipsed Bennett’s. Upon hearing that it was going to be a time-travel story, Roddenberry pitched his rejected treatment from 1980, only to be rebuffed again. The finished product, 1986’s *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, emerged as one of the most successful and popular movies in the series, receiving acclaim from critics and fans alike, and a box office take of $133 million.

At that point, William Shatner exercised a contractual clause that guaranteed him every perk that Nimoy got (and vice versa) to gain the director’s chair for the fifth movie. He also developed the story, which involved a renegade Vulcan (revealed to be Spock’s half-brother) hijacking the Enterprise to embark on a quest to find God, literally. Roddenberry vehemently opposed nearly every aspect of the story, but zeroed in on the search

“I SAID, ‘LEONARD, IF YOU COME BACK, I’M GOING TO GIVE YOU THE GREATEST DEATH SCENE SINCE JANET LEIGH IN *PSYCHO*.’”

BACK AGAIN

Nimoy's change of heart about playing Spock, and a spot in the director's chair, gave the crew a chance to return to their iconic roles for a third film.

for the Almighty. While still technically sidelined from the movies, Roddenberry used all of his remaining influence to get significant changes made.

Having been rejected himself for bringing a God-based story to a *Star Trek* movie, Roddenberry used the same argument against this version of the idea. "I thought it was very unwise to do a story which seemed to be talking about God because there are so many versions about what God is or isn't," Roddenberry said in 1989.

The story was overhauled to address Roddenberry's objections—and those of producer Harve Bennett, whose misgivings actually echoed Roddenberry's. Shatner later expressed regret about the creative compromises he made, which he felt "eviscerated" the main thrust of the film. But 1989's *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* was also hampered by a weak screenplay, ill-fitting humor, and substandard special effects. With a budget of around $30 million, the film only earned about $70 million. Savaged by most critics and fans, it was considered a flop, and nearly ended the movie series once and for all.

It was largely due to the fact that 1991 marked *Star Trek*'s 25th anniversary that the original cast was given a more proper, graceful sendoff. Paramount asked Nimoy to develop a sixth movie. Taking the role of

PANAVISION

ONE MORE TIME

Nimoy, shown here with actress Kim Cattrell as Valeris, worked on the fourth film as both an actor and story contributor.

AT THE HELM

For the next movie, William Shatner assumed director duties in addition to playing Kirk.

executive producer, Nimoy recruited Nicholas Meyer, who served as co-writer (with Denny Martin Flinn) and director. The film depicted the first steps towards peace between the United Federation of Planets and its longtime enemy, the Klingon Empire, echoing the closing days of the Cold War between the U.S. and Russia, with Captain Kirk and his crew embarking on one last mission before retiring from Starfleet.

The passage of time and the inescapable fact that all things must come to an end were the two central themes of *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*. These ideas became even more poignant when they were reflected in real life just weeks before the movie's release: Gene Roddenberry—the man who started it all—died on October 24, 1991, after a long period of failing health. Reportedly, one of his last acts was to watch the final cut of the film, after which he demanded that significant chunks that he found objectionable be removed. The changes were not made. Still, *The Undiscovered Country* was dedicated to Roddenberry, and proved to be a successful return to form for the franchise. Budgeted at around $27 million, it earned nearly $97 million and received a warm reception from critics and fans. Understanding that this really was the last hooray for the majority of the original cast, the movie ends with the U.S.S. Enterprise literally fading into sunlight, followed by the cast signing off in a moving farewell.

Having revived *Star Trek* for the fans who wanted them to return and more than making up for the show's premature cancellation more than two decades earlier, the original cast was ready to call the mission complete. Meanwhile, almost in a parallel *Star Trek* universe, the next era of the franchise had already begun. Gene Roddenberry was gone, but the core ideas of his creative vision were strong enough to live on—and prosper.

CHAPTER 11

THE ONGOING MISSION

In the final act of his life, Gene Roddenberry left his mark on *Star Trek* by creating a new series, and in so doing he set the franchise on a course that promises to last forever

ENGAGE
Despite a bumpy start, *The Next Generation* developed its own loyal fan base.

When it came to creative control of the original *Star Trek* movie series, Gene Roddenberry won a few skirmishes, but he lost the war. It was on television, however, the medium where *Star Trek* was born, that Roddenberry had his final, and perhaps greatest victory.

In 1986, as part of the 20th anniversary celebration—which included the release of *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*—Paramount announced that the franchise would finally return to TV. The new series was slated to air in first-run syndication instead of on a network, and would feature a new cast and a new Enterprise. Even more significantly, Gene Roddenberry himself would create and serve as executive producer of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, set nearly 80 years after the adventures of Captain Kirk and his crew.

The announcement was met with great skepticism, as many observers felt that a new *Star Trek* could not succeed without the familiar characters. Leonard Nimoy was firmly in that camp. "They're betting they can catch lightning in a bottle again, but the chemistry of that group of characters was unique," he told *The New York Times*.

Accepting the challenge, Roddenberry brought in key contributors from the original series to help him shape *The Next Generation*, including Robert H. Justman, D.C. Fontana, and David Gerrold. The show premiered in September 1987, introducing the world to Captain Jean Luc-Picard, played by Patrick Stewart, and his crew, which included android science officer Data (Brent Spiner), Klingon security officer Worf (Michael Dorn), First Officer William Riker (Jonathan Frakes), Chief Medical Officer Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden), her teenage son, Wesley (Wil Wheaton), empathic Ship's Counselor Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis), and blind helmsman—later to become Chief Engineer—Geordi LaForge (LeVar Burton, the most well known cast member at the time.)

"THEY'RE BETTING THEY CAN CATCH LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE AGAIN"

BACK IN CHARGE

Roddenberry, shown with LaVar Burton, used *The Next Generation* to reestablish his values and beliefs in *Star Trek*.

When it came to the writing on *The Next Generation,* Roddenberry established strict rules. It was his view that by the 24th century, humans would achieve near-perfection as a species, which meant there could be no conflict between the crew members of the Enterprise—all conflicts had to come from outside forces, namely the alien beings and situations that the crew encountered. And they had to be resolved with an absolute minimum of violence. The show's writers struggled under these restrictions, feeling unable to push the regular characters in ways that would make them more interesting and multi-dimensional. This led to massive turnover amongst the writing staff. But Roddenberry would not be swayed. In 1991, he described *The Next Generation* as "the product of my mature thought and having achieved a majority of years."

Having lost control of the movies, Roddenberry did everything he could to maintain his position on *The Next Generation,* to the extent that his attorney, Leonard Maizlish, was a regular presence at the office. Maizlish reportedly went after anyone he perceived as a threat to his client, and helped to sour Roddenberry's longstanding friendships with Fontana and Gerrold, both of whom were gone by the end of the first season. (Justman also left, though his friendship with Roddenberry endured.)

From the start, *The Next Generation* garnered strong ratings. But many fans and critics were unimpressed in the early days, taking issue with what they felt were weak, derivative, and ill-conceived scripts and stiff performances. The first season—the one with which Roddenberry was most directly involved—is generally considered the weakest. As Roddenberry's health declined during the second season, he cut back on his workload and his right-hand man, Rick Berman, filled the void as executive producer. Much to the writers' disappointment, Berman maintained Roddenberry's edict about intra-crew conflict. "I took it on as my responsibility to try to be the upholder of Gene's

ONWARD

Shows like *Deep Space Nine* and crossover appearances in the movies forged *Star Trek* as a vast and endless universe for fans..

"I TOOK IT ON AS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO TRY TO BE THE UPHOLDER OF GENE'S PHILOSOPHY."

philosophy," he explained in an interview.

> AS OF 2021, CBS ALL ACCESS HAD LAUNCHED THREE NEW *STAR TREK* SHOWS WITH MORE SERIES IN DEVELOPMENT.

CAPTAIN'S CHAIR
With Chris Pine taking on the role of young Kirk in 2009's *Star Trek*, the iconic Enterprise crew had returned.

By the third season, the show was establishing its own identity and voice and gaining a popularity that matched—and some would say even surpassed—that of the original series. Many skeptics came around, including Nimoy, who, in 1991, guest-starred in a two-parter in which an older Spock shared an adventure with Picard and Data. The episodes aired just weeks after Roddenberry's death.

Star Trek: The Next Generation ran for seven seasons, with 178 episodes—99 more than the original series. In 1994, it graduated to the big screen with *Star Trek Generations*, in which Picard teamed up with William Shatner's time-lost Captain Kirk. The film ended with Kirk's death, marking Shatner's official exit from *Star Trek*. *The Next Generation* cast would make three more movies: 1996's *First Contact*, 1998's *Insurrection*, and 2002's *Nemesis*.

The success of The Next Generation led to the creation of other *Star Trek* shows under the guidance of Rick Berman and his team: *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*, and *Enterprise*. Through it all, Berman said, he strived to remain true to Roddenberry's vision. "I had absolutely no thoughts about putting my own imprint on *Star Trek*," he told *startrek.com* in 2011. "It was my hope that the direction we went in with *DS9*—and onward with the other shows—was something he would have thought was the right direction to go."

By 2009, *Star Trek* had run its course on television once again and was given a cinematic reboot, courtesy of director J.J. Abrams. The film, simply titled *Star Trek*, went back to the original crew, establishing a new timeline and showing how the young Kirk (Chris Pine), Spock (Zachary Quinto), and the other classic characters first came together. Nimoy supported the effort and appeared as an elderly Spock—a role he would reprise in the 2013 sequel, *Star Trek Into Darkness*, which marked his final screen appearance. Nimoy died on February 27, 2015, and the third film in the rebooted series, 2016's *Star Trek Beyond*, was dedicated to his memory.

Since then, *Star Trek* has experienced another rebirth on television. As of 2021, CBS All Access had launched *Discovery*, *Picard*, and the animated *Lower Decks*, with more series in development—including *Strange New Worlds*, featuring the U.S.S. Enterprise under the command of Captain Christopher Pike. Henry Alonso Myers, an executive producer for *Strange New Worlds*, joked that Roddenberry's "The Cage" could be considered the pilot, making it "the longest pilot-to-series pickup in the history of television."

The question raised

SHOWING THE WAY

Director J.J. Abrams stepped up to direct two new *Star Trek* films. After his success with a very challenging assignment, he later rebooted *Star Wars.*

whenever a new *Star Trek* project is announced is, "Will it be faithful to Roddenberry's vision?" As with beauty, it's all in the eye of the beholder. While Nimoy enjoyed the "reboot" movies, George Takei was less enthusiastic. "*Star Trek* was Gene Roddenberry's vision of a Utopian society, but it was also good, rip-snortin' space opera," Takei observed in 2020. "The people who have inherited *Star Trek* now are into the rip-snortin' space opera. [But] I don't see Gene Roddenberry's metaphoric storytelling about issues of our time."

Not that the current caretakers aren't trying. "There isn't really a day that goes by where we don't think very consciously about how [Roddenberry] would want the messaging of *Star Trek* to go, and is what we're doing consistent with the messaging of *Star Trek* as he envisioned it?" Alex Kurtzman, who oversees all of CBS's *Star Trek* TV projects, said in a recent interview. "It's really important to all of us. I hope he would appreciate it. I hope he would be proud."

Was Roddenberry proud of the show he created and all that followed? The question of how he felt about *Star Trek* at a personal level still lingers. It is clearly the project to which he devoted most of his professional life, and what he will be remembered for forever, yet he rarely spoke in public about what it all meant to him beyond a constant fight to uphold a vision. But, during an interview in 1988, Roddenberry did look into the unknown to paint a picture of *Star Trek*'s future, and in so doing what it represents at its core. His answer, appropriately, speaks to something much bigger than TV or movies.

"I would hope there are bright young people growing up all the time who will bring to *[Star Trek]* levels and areas that were beyond me," he said. "And I don't feel jealous about that at all... it will go on without any of us and get better and better and better, because that really is the human condition—to improve and improve."

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STAR TREK

THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY

"I HOPE THAT *STAR TREK* HAS HELPED TO SHOW US WHAT WE CAN BE IF WE BELIEVE IN OURSELVES AND OUR ABILITIES."

– GENE RODDENBERRY